

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Doctor of Ministry

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: ASSESSING THE PHENOMENON OF BACKSLIDING AMONG MEN IN THE SELECTED CONGREGATIONS IN NYAMIRA WEST FIELD, EAST KENYA UNION CONFERENCE

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Date: May 2025

The church stands as a vital institution within society, primarily offering spiritual guidance that encourages individuals to confront emotional, psychological, and mental challenges, as well as family-related issues, in a setting characterized by hope and optimism. Despite this critical role, a concerning development has been the noticeable decrease in male participation within church communities. The study assessed the phenomenon of backsliding among men in church attendance in selected congregations in Nyamira West Field, Kenya. It employed a quantitative method for data collection, using a self-generated questionnaire as the research instrument to survey respondents on a four-point Likert scale, measuring their attitudes and opinions. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The sample comprised 179 backslidden men. The raw data were analyzed electronically using the Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for descriptive data analysis. Based on the findings, the leading reasons for backsliding were loss of faith, loss of interest, involvement in drinking alcohol, criticism from fellow church members, lack of frequent visitation, and discrimination. Therefore, the study recommended that church pastors and leaders visit and reclaim backsliders, actively involving each church member in weekly activities to retain and nurture them spiritually. Additionally, it was deemed essential to revive the small group ministry, Sabbath afternoon program, prayer ministry, visitation program, and leadership training to address the concerning trend of backsliding. The study further recommended conducting research using both qualitative and mixed methods to gain a clearer understanding of backsliding.

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A dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment

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by

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This work is dedicated to my beloved wife Monicah Kerubo,  
and our lovely children Estherlois Moraa  
and Joy Kwamboka.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUA-ISERC	Adventist University of Africa Institution Scientific and Ethics Review Committee
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

While churches are expected to experience periodic numerical growth among both men and women through evangelistic efforts such as campaigns, outreach programs, camp meetings, seminars, departmental congresses, and spiritual revivals, it has been observed that a higher proportion of men tend to leave the church shortly after baptism compared to women. This trend raises important questions about the effectiveness of post-baptismal support and the spiritual nurturing of male converts.

However, in the above pastoral observation, numerical church growth is not the primary goal of the church; rather, it is a significant outcome of the church's disciple-making process and the work of the Holy Spirit. Focusing solely on increasing numbers risks reducing ministry to mere pragmatism and undermining the message of the gospel. The true philosophy of church growth emphasizes that numbers matter because they represent people — and people matter deeply to God. Even in the book of Acts, the early church in Jerusalem valued numbers, acknowledging their importance for ministry and record-keeping.<sup>1</sup>

Men have significantly dwindled in their spiritual development, and some have become social misfits in society. Their absence from the church membership has created a gap in some leadership roles that need to be filled by men. There is scant

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Parks, "Measuring Numerical Church Growth Rates," *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* 10, no. 3 (1999): 29-39. Accessed 22 May 2025. <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/jascg>.

literature to address this situation, thus necessitating research to understand this concerning condition.

Little has been researched specifically on the backsliding of men from church membership, yet it remains a concerning phenomenon that warrants investigation. However, the following has been written regarding backsliding and membership dropouts: men convicted of criminal offenses or those who have experienced other mental health or interpersonal difficulties. Causes of membership dropout among selected churches in the East Jamaica Conference include violation of the commandment against adultery, a decline in personal spiritual life, lack of support during crises, working on the Sabbath, and inadequate preparation for baptism leading to inconsistency.<sup>2</sup>

The primary reasons for discontinuing membership and the major contributing factors to the loss of faith and disassociation from the church include working on the Sabbath, smoking, drinking alcoholic beverages, and using drugs, among others.<sup>3</sup> The causes of membership dropout in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists and the ways to reduce it include a lack of inclusivity, interpersonal conflicts, and poor church programs.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Horace A. Russell, "A Study of the Causes of Membership Dropout among Selected Churches in the East Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventists," (DMin project, Andrews University, 1990). Accessed 14 September 2023, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1370&context=dmin>.

<sup>3</sup> Louis C. Nielsen, "Disassociation: An investigation into the contributing factors of backsliding and separation from the Seventh-day Adventist church in Michigan," (DMin project, Andrews University, 1977). Accessed 13 September 2023, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1058&context=hrsa>.

<sup>4</sup> Clinton P. Lewis, "Falling from the faith: causes of membership dropout in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists," (DMin diss., Andrews University, 1997). Accessed 14 September 2023, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1407&context=dmin>.

Another article has been written with Asia-Africa in mind, focusing on ‘nurturing and retaining newly baptized members in Asia-Africa to help them become fully integrated Seventh-day Adventist Church members.’<sup>5</sup>

The book ‘Transforming the church in Africa’ by Vernon E. Light features the discipleship process in Africa as understood by evangelicals, covering: modernism, postmodernism, African Traditional Religion, and central Christian doctrine.<sup>6</sup> Another article from Tanzania examines the concept of Christian backsliding in worship services among university students. It discusses the reasons why many university students stop attending worship services and morning devotions. These reasons include bad peer pressure, a lack of fear of God, psychological problems, insufficient individual trust in God, and various anxieties.<sup>7</sup>

Locally, the one written within the Adventist church in Kenya covers, a ‘strategy to increase the retention of members in Nyaguta district.’<sup>8</sup> Little research has been conducted on backsliding, but it does not explain why men tend to backslide from weekly church attendance and drop out of church membership. The ultimate goal of this research is to assess the phenomenon of backsliding among men.

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<sup>5</sup> Javan Kamanutsi Harelimana. “Membership retention in a growing church: The case in the Seventh-day Adventist church,” *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* 10 (2014): 53-67. Accessed 14 September 2023. <https://africansdahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Membership-and-Retention-by-Harelimana.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Vernon E. Light, *Transforming the Church in Africa: A New Contextually-Relevant Discipleship Model* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2012). Accessed 15 September 2023. <https://books.google.co.ke/books?Transforming+the+Church+in+Africa>.

<sup>7</sup> Gwamaka Kabuje and Elia Shabani Mligo. “Backsliding from the Worship of God as a Problem among University Students in Tanzania: A Case of the Chaplaincy of Teofilo,” *TEKU Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 1, no. 1 (June 2021): 20–28, accessed on 15 September 2023, <https://www.teku.ac.tz/tjis.php> or <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353935614>.

<sup>8</sup> Paul G. Kiage, “A Strategy to Increase the Retention of Members in the Nyaguta District,” (DMin diss., Andrews University, 2014), accessed 14 September 2023, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin>.

Male figures play a vital role in families as well as in churches. Biblically, a man (patriarch) performed the roles of a father, ruler, and priest in the family and clan; he exercised authority over his children (Deut 6:6-9; Prov 22:6). He offered morning and evening sacrifices on behalf of his family and house church (Job 1:5). He was regarded as the head in both religious and secular matters. The father represented the divine lawgiver while laboring in God's vineyard. Therefore, the patriarchal system, from Abraham down to several generations until the coming of Jesus, was established to preserve the knowledge of God.

The absence of male figures in churches today has had a detrimental impact not only on the church community but also on families. How will the church be affected? Several vital departments will suffer from the absence of men in church services: eldership, deaconate, Personal Ministries, Adventist Men, Family Ministries, Community Services, Youth Ministries, Public Affairs, and Religious Liberty.<sup>9</sup> When male fathers are spiritually inactive, both families and the church will miss teachers, coaches, good mentors, and role models to emulate. Moral standards will be compromised at home and in churches. Children will miss a solid fatherly foundation to rebuke, admonish, instruct, and teach them good ethical values. If children lack a strong foundation at home, the church will also be affected, resulting in children who are disobedient, unruly, and stubborn, who will later become adults lacking moral values.

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<sup>9</sup> Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 20th ed. (Silver Spring, Maryland: Review & Herald, 2022), 77-84, 98-99, 101-102, 107-108, 110-115. Accessed 16 November 2023. <https://www.adventist.org>.

## **Background of the Ministry Context**

Nyamira West Field headquarters is situated in Nyamira County, Kenya. The territory includes Masaba North and Manga sub-counties of Nyamira County; and Masaba South, Kitutu Chache South, and Kitutu Chache North sub-counties of Kisii County. The two pastoral districts (Mochenwa and Rigena) fall under Gesima, Rigoma wards in Masaba North Sub-county. According to the statistics of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022, there were 313 churches, 70,805 members, and a population of 932,578.<sup>10</sup>

In the traditional Abagusii cultural practices, men could always go out for drinking while the women went to work in the fields and children took care of the flock and also played in the field. The typical habits of men include drunkenness, drug abuse, adultery, and domestic violence. These practices have not changed for decades now, especially in the village context, where one can always observe the men huddled together in drinking sprees. They usually remain in these places from morning up to and until midnight. Moral values are compromised in these drinking places. Polygamy is another common cultural practice that has been practiced to date. Village clan leaders were chosen based on the size of their families. It was believed that if a man had several wives, then he was highly regarded as virile and judged able to arbitrate in village cases.<sup>11</sup>

These traditional cultural practices have impacted SDA churches in Gusii land. In many African Christian communities, men in polygamous unions are often denied baptism due to church doctrines that reject polygamy. This exclusion can lead some individuals to engage in extramarital affairs as a means to navigate around these

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<sup>10</sup> General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Office of the Archives, Statistics, and Research, *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book 2022* (Silver Spring, MA: Pacific Press, 2022), 62.

<sup>11</sup> John Sorana Akama, and Robert M. *Ethnography of the Gusii of Western Kenya: A Vanished Cultural Heritage* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).

restrictions, resulting in feelings of shame and eventual withdrawal from church life.<sup>12</sup>

Those who dare to attend church services are reluctant to take on any church responsibilities; they become passive members of the church.

Backsliding remains a significant concern, as evidenced in Chapter Four through the experiences of members in the Mochenwa and Rigena churches. These findings may be indicative of broader patterns affecting other congregations within the Nyamira West Field and potentially throughout the East Kenya Union Conference. Few men attend church, and many do not participate in church activities or evangelistic programs when needed. Although churches regard men as the spiritual patriarchs of the church and the backbone of homes and families, unfortunately, this gender group is spiritually benumbed.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Backsliding is a widespread challenge facing many churches in the postmodern era, particularly affecting men. The cultural shift of postmodernism—characterized by skepticism towards absolute truths, moral relativism, and the emphasis on individual experience—has significantly influenced men's engagement with institutional religion. These cultural factors often lead to reduced commitment among male congregants, resulting in increased rates of disengagement and backsliding.<sup>13</sup> Scholarly literature, as explained above, has extensively focused on youth and general membership church dropouts, apostasy, disassociation, inactivity,

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<sup>12</sup> Ronald L. Lawson, "Church-Sponsored Injustice: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Polygamous Converts." *Ronaldlawson*, May 27 (2018): 2018. Accessed 22 May 2025. <https://ronaldlawson.net/2018/05/27/church-sponsored-injustice-the-seventh-day-adventist-church-and-polygamous-converts/>.

<sup>13</sup> E. W. Ndirangu, *A Declining Pattern of Men in the Church: Examining Gender Imbalance and Future Implications*. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 5(8), (2024) 1474–1482. Accessed 22 May 2025. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382836355\\_A\\_Declining\\_Pattern\\_of\\_Men\\_in\\_the\\_Church\\_Examining\\_Gender\\_Imbalance\\_and\\_Future\\_Implications](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382836355_A_Declining_Pattern_of_Men_in_the_Church_Examining_Gender_Imbalance_and_Future_Implications).

disfellowship, disengagement and falling away, while neglecting the backslidden male demographic. The backsliding of men is a situation that demands research to determine the underlying reasons contributing to their decline in church attendance and their failure to assume expected roles.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to establish the reasons and root causes of men's backsliding from weekly Sabbath attendance and worship services in the Mochenwa and Rigena districts. The results would inform solutions to curb men's backsliding, reclaim, retain, and nurture newcomers, and finally, disciple and mentor those already in the church.

### **Research Questions**

1. What were the root causes of men's backsliding from church membership in selected congregants in Nyamira West Field, East Kenya Union Conference?
2. What were the backsliders' practices while being a church member before backsliding in selected congregants in Nyamira West Field, East Kenya Union Conference?
3. How were the backsliders personally involved in church programs and attendance during church membership before dropping out in selected congregants in Nyamira West Field, East Kenya Union Conference?
4. What were the backsliders' level of satisfaction with Church programs in selected congregants in Nyamira West Field, East Kenya Union Conference?

## **Justification of the Study**

Pastoral observation in recent times indicated a drastic decline in men attending weekly church services in the Mochenwa and Rigena districts. Yet, you would find the same men flocking to other social and political forums. Understanding why men are backsliding from church membership was crucial for the spiritual health and sustainability of the church. There was a need to study the root causes of men distancing themselves from the weekly church programs. The study would benefit not only the churches of the Nyamira West Field but also those across the East Kenya Union Conference.

The study focused on men who have backslidden, who should have been key players in church operations. There has been a gradual decline in the involvement of men within many congregations in the Mochenwa and Rigena Pastoral Districts of Nyamira West Field. The spiritual growth and development of the church would significantly improve if both men and women were actively engaged in church activities. This was immensely illustrated by a scenario in which many men had backslidden, creating a vacuum in church membership and leadership across numerous congregations. Due to this situation, local church leadership must take decisive action to reclaim, retain, nurture, and disciple men toward spiritual maturity. Consequently, these men will be safeguarded from backsliding or converting to other faiths. This was the essence of this research.

## **Delimitation**

The problem of men who have backslidden and subsequently stopped attending church, as noted by Murrow, is prevalent across all Christian denominations. Regardless of one's Christian faith affiliation and the church's name on the outside, there are always more women inside than men. Many of the men

attending services tend to be largely passive, bored, or uncomfortable.<sup>14</sup> This phenomenon is also affecting the Seventh-day Adventist churches throughout the East Kenya Union Conference. However, this research focused solely on selected congregations from the Mochenwa and Rigena pastoral districts in the Nyamira West Field. This limitation ensured that the study was practical and achievable within a specific time frame.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative research method, as affirmed by Creswell, to collect and analyze data from the field through questionnaires.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the study utilized survey questions in the questionnaire as a tool for data collection. A questionnaire consisted of written closed-ended questions, usually accompanied by multiple-choice or scaled response options. Respondents provided their answers to the questionnaire. Thus, respondents read the questions, interpreted what was expected, and then wrote down their answers.<sup>16</sup>

Primary data was collected from the selected congregations of backslidden men in Nyamira West Field.

### **Expectations**

By the end of this study, it was anticipated that the researcher would identify the reasons and root causes for the backsliding of men from weekly church attendance. Additionally, the church was expected to uncover the factors contributing

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<sup>14</sup> David Murrow. *Why Men Hate Going to Church*. (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2011), vii.

<sup>15</sup> John W. Creswell. *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative, & Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 147-177.

<sup>16</sup> Kumar, *Research Methodology*, 178.

to this decline and how the leadership could implement measures to reverse this trend. This study will assist the church in developing effective programs to reclaim, retain, and nurture male participation in churches. As a result, the number of backslidden men will be significantly reduced. The church will also take responsibility for actively engaging men in all church programs to keep them involved and occupied.

### **Outline**

The study comprised six chapters, as follows: Chapter 1 presented the introduction, the background of the ministry context, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, justification, delimitation, methodology and procedures, expectations, and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 focused on the biblical and theological engagement for addressing backsliders, including backsliding in the Old Testament, backsliding in the New Testament, Ellen G. White's perspective on the role of the father, her view on backsliding, and a summary. This chapter highlighted critical incidents from Old and New Testament texts relevant to the research topic, alongside Ellen G. White's writings. Biblical dictionaries, commentaries, encyclopedias, and other pertinent literature were utilized as references.

Chapter 3 began with a literature review that focused on scholarly works to provide an understanding of the backsliding of men. Chapter 4 discussed the methodology, covering research design, appropriateness of the study, population and sample size, sampling procedures, sampling criteria, instrumentation, validity and reliability, data collection process, data analysis ethical considerations, and a description of the micro context profile.

Chapter 5 presented the results and discussions. Finally, in Chapter 6, the study concluded with a summary of the results, conclusions drawn from the summaries, and recommendations for future research based on those conclusions.

In summary, this study was comprehensive, covering the introduction, the biblical and theological foundations, and the Spirit of Prophecy. It included a literature review, research design, summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

### **Definitions of Terms**

This section will cover the definition of difficult terms and acronyms.

*Apostasy* is a rejection of Yahweh in favor of pagan deities. It is a change from one denomination's faith or religious affiliation to another.

*Backsliding* is a failure in testimony and practical Christian living, resulting in a believer living in a wayward way that dishonors the Lord. It is an increase in disobedience and a decrease in obedience to Christ Jesus as Lord and personal Savior.

*Disassociation* is the act of distancing and separating oneself from church attendance and programs. It also refers to the voluntary or formal withdrawal of a member from church fellowship.

*Disciple* is a learner and a follower of Christ.

*Discipleship* is a widely accepted term that describes the intentional, ongoing, or growing life of a follower of Christ, which is also marked by continuous learning, obedience, relationship, and spiritual maturity.

*Disfellowship* is the formal removal of a member from church membership, due to serious misconduct. This is usually a disciplinary action through the church board and a business meeting.

*Dropout* is the term for when a church member stops attending, participating in church activities, or identifying with a certain church.

*Falling away* means when a church member has a prolonged absence from church attendance.

*Non-attendance or Inactive* is to stop attending weekly church services as scheduled.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ENGAGING BACKSLIDERS

This chapter will tackle the biblical and theological foundations for the chosen topic under study. Biblically, it was not God's intention for people to fall from His divine plan but to live in harmony with His commands, oracles, and statutes. That is the reason for creating humanity in His image and likeness (Gen 1:26). Consequently, there was a game changer: God's divine plan fell apart, and the first human beings fell short of God's glory by taking commands and directives from a different commander. This chapter will explore examples of men who backslid in the biblical dispensation.

#### **Backsliding in the Bible**

We read, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (Hos 14:4). The whole of the book of Hosea has a picture of unfaithfulness. Not only in the above text, but still in Hosea there is an element of backsliding. God's people were bent to backsliding; none was found exalting God (Hos 11:7). This was God's admonition to the Israelites, giving the analogy of the unfaithfulness of Gomer to prophet Hosea. They had turned away from their true God to the worship of idols. Apostasy, on the other hand, is far more serious. For that, there is no road to recovery and restoration.

An apostate is doomed to be bound forever in his sin, both in this world and in the next.<sup>1</sup>

A prophetic term, almost exclusive to Jeremiah and Hosea, describing Israel's infidelity to Yahweh, more properly "back-turning," often translated as faithless, rebellion, treachery against God (cf Isa 57:17; 59:12-13; Jer 3:14, 22; 8:5; 31:22; 49:4; Hos 11:7; 14:4). The word undoubtedly has a covenantal association. Israel, as the wife of Yahweh, has proved unfaithful and embraced paganism. But Israel's backsliding is not simply religious apostasy (a rejection of Yahweh for pagan deities, or introduction of pagan rites into Yahweh-worship), but also moral apostasy – a forgetting or rejection of the ordinances of the Lord (Jer 8:7); covetousness (Isa 57:17); practicing deceit (Jer 8:5); given to covetousness and dealing falsely (Jer 8:10). People, prophets, and priests together were guilty, refusing to respond to prophetic entreaty.<sup>2</sup>

The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible further explains that it is to turn back or go backward. It referred to the Israelites turning away from the true and living God to the worshiping of the heathen nature gods and idols, usually referred to by the name Baal.<sup>3</sup> Backsliding as described by the New Bible dictionary is closely linked to apostasy, which means, falling from the faith (1 Tim 4:1) and the living God (Heb

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<sup>1</sup> "The Difference Between Backsliding and Apostasy - Algernon James Pollock (#59572) - BTP," accessed September 29, 2023, <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/the-difference-between-backsliding-and-apostasy/algernon-james-pollock/salvation-assured/a-j-pollock/la59572>.

<sup>2</sup> George Arthur Buttrick ed., et al., eds., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustr. Encyclopedia: Identifying and Explaining All Proper Names and Significant Terms and Subjects in the Holy Scriptures, Including the Apocrypha: With Attention to Archaeological Discoveries and Researches into the Life and Faith of Ancient Times. 1: A-D / George Arthur Buttrick; Kepler, Thomas Samuel u.a. [Hrsg.]*, 14. print (Nashville: Abingdon Pr, 1984), 339.

<sup>3</sup> Merrill C. Tenney and Moisés. Silva, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible. Volume 1: A-C*, Epub ed (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 481-482.

3:12).<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the international standard Bible encyclopedia asserts that forsaking God was the characteristic and often recurring sin of the chosen people, especially in their contact with idolatrous nations.<sup>5</sup>

The relevant Hebrew terms used when Israel turned away from the true living God to worship the heathen nature gods and idols, usually referred to with the name BAAL. The name backsliding does not appear in the New Testament (NT), but the idea implied (Mark 4:16, 17; Luke 9:62; Gal 3:1-5; 1 Tim 5:15; 2 Tim 4:10; Rev 2:4, 5; 3:17). The NT concept carries with it the idea that those who once made a profession of the Christian faith have turned aside or have reverted to a life of sin and spiritual indifference.<sup>6</sup> A deliberate turning away from and rejection of God. This language is found most frequently in the OT, especially in Jeremiah, where warnings are often accompanied by God's invitations to his people to repent and turn to him from their sinful ways, and God will cure their backsliding (Jer 3:11-12, 22).<sup>7</sup> Some of the commonly used names in place of backsliding are dropouts, falling away, disassociation, and inactive.

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<sup>4</sup> J. D. Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1996), 58.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. 1: A - D* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), 192.

<sup>6</sup> J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), 159.

<sup>7</sup> Tremper Longman, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2013), 161.

## **Examples of Backsliding in the Old Testament**

### **The Backsliding and Fall of Adam**

God created Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden to tend it. Instructions and commands from the Creator accompanied him on what to eat and what not to eat to avoid consequences. Life began very well and there was no sign of any impending danger. Several other creatures were made and Adam gave them names, which they are called to this day. Then God created Eve from Adam's rib, which excited him because she was now part of him, and they were happy together.

The divine plan that God had put in place was for humanity to enjoy a pleasant life of holiness and happiness, the grace and favor of God, peace and beauty, and a good and very good life for eternity. Unfortunately, this was altered, and we now have an account of the sin and misery of our first parents, the wrath and curse of God against them, the peace of creation disturbed, and its beauty stained and sullied, all bad, very bad. 'Through one man sin entered the world and death, thus death spread to all men because all sinned' (Rom 5:12). As soon as Adam fell, God's glory and righteousness left him; he hid from the presence of God because of fear, guilt, and shame (Gen 3:8). The one who used to commune and talk with his Creator, he now ran away from God.<sup>8</sup>

Adam was very much aware of all the animals; he had studied them keenly while naming them, and he was very much aware of the craftiness of the serpent. Satan, using the medium of a serpent, impersonated himself and approached Eve, who didn't have as much knowledge of the animals as Adam did, because, by the time Adam was naming the animals, Eve was not in existence. He beguiled Eve, and she

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis-Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 22.

partook of the forbidden fruit and thereafter gave her husband who, without resistance, partook also. No sooner did they partake of the forbidden fruit than the glory of God left them, and they found themselves naked. Their eyes were open, and they saw what was before hidden; their excellence was stripped off, lost their innocence, and now fallen into a state of indigence and danger. The eyes and minds were clouded with shame, fear, confusion, and guilt.<sup>9</sup>

God, in His grace and wisdom, knowing what had taken place, came looking for Adam and Eve. God used to commune with them in the garden, probably at the usual cool evening time. Perhaps this was the time our first parents employed to in the more solemn acts of their religious worship when God was ever present. The time of their solemn worship has ushered in; God is present, but Adam and Eve are absent from the place of meeting. They had sinned and run away to hide among the trees. They were overtaken by shame because, in aiming to be like God, they were now sunk into a state of wretchedness, fear for being deceived and guilt for transgressing God's commands.<sup>10</sup>

God specifically asked Adam where he was and whether he had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17; 3:9, 11). Adam's answer showed that he did not take responsibility for his sin and guilt, yet in effect, confessed it by owning his shame and fear. Instead, he shifted the blame to his wife. He not only lays the blame on his wife but expresses it tactfully to reflect on God himself, for He is the one who gave her to himself. Thus, he insinuates that God was an accessory to his sin: He gave him the woman, and she gave him the fruit; so that He seemed to have it at

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<sup>9</sup> Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary: Genesis-Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), 51.

<sup>10</sup> Clarke, 52.

but one removes from God's hand. Though God knows all our sins, He will know them from us and requires from us an ingenuous confession of them; not that He may be informed, but that we be humbled.<sup>11</sup>

If God had not called for him, to reclaim him, his condition would have been as desperate as that of the fallen angels; this lost sheep would have wandered endlessly. If the good Shepherd had not sought after him, to bring him back, and, so that, reminded him where he was, where he should not be, and where he could not be either happy or easy.<sup>12</sup>

The inferences drawn from this fall are (1) the serpent made Eve cast doubt on what God said, maybe Adam did not hear it clearly when God spoke to him. This is one of the key issues why people would end up ignoring God's command and word because the devil would sow the seeds of doubt. (2) Another danger is the interpretation of God's motive for what He said. Did God say and mean what He said? Satan will make people take God's commands as unreasonable and outdated. We should not doubt what God says, our responsibilities are to obey what God says and that is the only way we can be satisfied. We should trust that God is righteous, perfect, good, and holy. Whatever He says and commands it is for our good. Otherwise, disaster will overtake us when we want to replace and doubt His statutes, commandments, judgments, and testimonies. Neither should we add, modify nor subtract what is written in His Holy Bible.

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<sup>11</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis-Deuteronomy* (USA: Hendrickson Publ., 2006), 22-23.

<sup>12</sup> Henry, 22.

## **The Backsliding of Cain, Adam's First-born Son**

After the fall of Adam and Eve, God pronounced enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent, but this was also mixed with the good news of salvation. God never removed the blessings of procreation as uttered in (Gen 1:28); their love and intimacy remained, resulting in the birth of children. Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters (Gen 5:4), but Cain and Abel seem to have been the two eldest sons. Cain signifies possession; for Eve, when she bore him, with joy, thankfulness, and great expectation, 'I have acquired a man from the Lord' (Gen 4:1).<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding that children are gifts and heritage from God (Ps 127:3), What does this mean? Most scholars and expositors think that Eve imagined that Cain was to be the Promised Seed that should bruise the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15).<sup>14</sup>

Later she bore another son by the name Abel, but nothing is said about his name. God never wanted these first fruits from Adam to be idle, each one of them was apportioned by their parents, work to do according to God's directives and calling, to subdue the land and have dominion over the animals (1:28). Cain was a tiller of the ground and Abel was a keeper of sheep (4:2). Overtime, both Cain and Abel brought offerings to God, according to their occupation. This was a gesture of their worship to God by bringing what He had given them.

Nothing is described in detail about Cain's offering but Abel brought the firstlings of his flock and chose the fat portions (Gen 4:4; cf Exod 13:12; Lev 3:3-17). Yet it seems that later Israelite practice would apply. God had respected and accepted Abel's and rejected Cain's. The manner of God's acceptance of Abel's offering is not

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<sup>13</sup> Henry, 29.

<sup>14</sup> Adam Clarke, *A commentary and Critical Notes*, Vol. 1, *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), 58.

revealed in the text; it might have consisted in the appearance of heavenly fire to consume the sacrifice as portrayed elsewhere in the Bible (Gen 15:17; Lev 9:24; 1 Kgs 18:38; 1 Chr 21:26; 2 Chr 7:1). Cain discovered that neither he nor his offering was accepted through any visible sign of God's pleasure and acceptance. A deeply burning anger was the result.<sup>15</sup>

The motivation and attitudes may have differed; God looks at both the offeror and the offering (Heb 11:4; cf 1 Sam 16:7). God's response shows clearly that Cain did not do well.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, God was still willing to help Cain make things right to be accepted, and hence he engaged him in a conversation. Cain became angry, and his countenance fell, this is the beginning of Cain's backsliding spirit. He felt fierce resentment against his brother and toward God. There was neither sorrow nor self-introspection for his sin, no prayer for confession, repentance, or forgiveness. He is likened to a stubborn sinner who cannot burn within under correction and admonition but becomes stiff-necked and rebellious.<sup>17</sup>

God divinely warned him ahead of time and persuaded him to do good for him to be accepted (Gen 4:5-7). This implies that God, in His mercy and great love, wanted to redeem Cain from his angry heart; thus, He set before him life and blessings, death, and curses (Deut 30:15). It was up to him to choose the best way for his heart. He lacked self-control and a second thought before carrying out his heinous acts.

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<sup>15</sup> Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: Genesis-Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978), 239.

<sup>16</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible: Genesis-Leviticus*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 372-373.

<sup>17</sup> Nichol, 239.

Cain showed outright displeasure at the difference God made between his sacrifice and Abel's. It was while he was approaching God that Cain knew how much he hated his brother. He became very wrath; he carried ill-nature in his face, and the show of his countenance witnessed against him. His indignation was directed towards God because of making such a difference between his offering and his brother's. He could have felt sorry to himself for his unfaithfulness and hypocrisy and hence be prompted to repentance and holy shame, just as the publican's, who would not lift his eyes to heaven (Lk 18:13). But, instead of this, he cast out his blame on God, for being partial in accepting his brother and rejecting his.<sup>18</sup> This is a clear indication of an unhumbled heart from Cain.

The basic issue here is not that Cain acts in a dejected fashion but how he responds to God's interaction with him about dejection. This implies that God's decision should not be the occasion for dejection and that a further response from Cain can put the situation right. The great temptation was actively right at hand, predatory, eager to make inroads into Cain's heart; it could consume his life, take hostage his thinking, feeling, and acting. He should not let it rule over him, he must master it. Sadly, he does not attend well to God's warning.<sup>19</sup> The murderer's act was preceded by wrath, enmity, and now a strong craving to eliminate innocent blood.

The climax of Cain's backsliding heart was to devise a secret plan to eliminate his brother. While at the field they contended over God's mercy, judgment and future punishment executed on the wicked. Abel defended them, while Cain was against them; in that scenario, Cain overpowered his brother Abel and murdered him (Gen

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<sup>18</sup> Henry, 30-31.

<sup>19</sup> Keck, 373.

4:8), going too far deep into sin and wickedness. He fell astray and extremely deviated from God's divine principles.<sup>20</sup>

This was an intentional homicide (Deut 19:11-13), which was only rewarded by killing the murderer. According to the laws put in place, Cain was supposed to be put to death. Whatever he contended with his brother came heavily on him, a punishment through the curse God uttered against him. Remember, God had already cursed the serpent and the ground (Gen 3:14, 17); now it falls on man for the first time. The ground will not yield good crops and he would be a fugitive and a vagabond (Gen 4:11-12). That means he will be a restless wanderer, living from hand to mouth. That does not mean that God left him, he placed a mark on him, a sign of protection and he could still get a portion of God's blessings.

The picture of Cain's judgment is remarkably similar to the exile Israel was warned of in Deut 28:16-18: "Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country; Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl; Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks; Cursed shall be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out." Like his parents, Adam and Eve, who were driven out of their home, the penalty of death was to be carried out against Cain by banishment from a protective community. Cain's response and words ("My punishment is greater than I can bear" (Gen 4:13), do not necessarily suggest repentance, but the Lord's response ("whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold" (Gen 4:15) implies that Cain's words are words of repentance.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Clarke, 60.

<sup>21</sup> Frank E. Gaebelien, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2, *Genesis to Numbers* (Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 64-65.

## **Backsliding during Noah's Time**

Genesis chapter five deals with the genealogical list of Adam's descendants and there was nothing at all negative spoken of any descendant. Then chapter six makes a radical transition that now narrates the sad story of wickedness that would bring about the flood. The world became so corrupt, wicked, and evil continually, that barely anything was left with a sign of godliness. People had turned their backs on the Creator God, and they became stiff-necked, which made God grieve in His heart to have created them.

The sons and daughters of Adam had greatly increased in number, that is, they had married, and had continued to have children as per the blessing of God in Gen 1:28: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it." The sons of God refer to the godly, pious descendants of Seth who married the godless line of Cain. These unholy alliances between Sethites and Cainites were responsible for the rapid increase of wickedness among the former. God has ever warned His followers not to marry unbelievers, because of the great danger to which the believer is thus exposed and to which he usually succumbs (Deut 7:3, 4). The Sethites did not heed God's warning, being overtaken by lustful sensuality, they were not content with the beauty of the godly race, and often preferred Cainite brides.<sup>22</sup> This intermarriage led to the pollution and contamination of godly character.

They were no longer subject to God's Spirit. These words indicate that the Holy Spirit could continue working but a little longer, and would then be withdrawn from the unregenerate and unrepentant of the human race.<sup>23</sup> Despite God's warning,

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<sup>22</sup> Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978), 250.

<sup>23</sup> Nichol, 250.

human beings were going on with their usual daily affairs: “marrying and giving to marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all (Matt 24:38-39). God’s patience with wickedness came to the limit, He had to pronounce judgment upon them, but before that, He gave them a reprieve of 120 years.<sup>24</sup>

God never intended to create and later destroy humankind, but when their cup of wickedness came to the brim. Human sin fills the divine heart with deep grief and pity. The repentance of God is an expression referring to the pain of divine love occasioned by the sinfulness of man. It presents the truth that God, in consistency with immutability, assumes a changed position for a changed man.<sup>25</sup>

The probation period of 120 years was meant for them to repent from their evil deeds and turn to God, but in vain. Despite all this, Noah found favor with God. When all other people had turned into wickedness Noah deliberately decided to obey God and follow His commands and statutes. God saved him from the divine judgment of the flood together with his family. Backsliding cannot sweep all people in the congregation; they could always be a remnant of those who will follow and obey the voice of God.

This population explosion is linked with an accompanying expansion of human wickedness. The intermarriage contributed in some way to the moral decline and an outbreak of worldwide immorality.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Rev. ed (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006), 113-115.

<sup>25</sup> Nichol, 251.

<sup>26</sup> Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary 1A (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 323.

## **The Backsliding of Lot from Abraham**

Abraham was first and foremost a friend of God Himself, he was separated from his heathen native place. God called and reclaimed Abraham from the vanity and folly of idol worship in Ur (Gen 12:1-3). This was a call to separate himself from the corruption around him, and Abraham obeyed by faith (Heb 11:8). God could not bless and use Abraham unless he was detached from the unbelieving community and put him in the place of His appointment. God in His call thus spiritually nurtured Abraham. He nurtured Abraham outside his native place. Abraham learned that spiritual development is not attained by making promises of God but by believing God's promises to us. Abraham left his native place *Ur* of the Chaldees, a land of idolatry, he took with him Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all the possessions he had gathered.

Lot was a partial orphan because he had lost his father Haran (Gen 11:28, 31). Abraham did not ask Lot to follow him, but Lot decided on his own to go with his uncle even without hearing or understanding God's call and promise. This required sacrifice and faith on the side of Lot. When Lot walked with the blessed Abraham, God also blessed him in the process with great possessions (Gen 13:5, 6). When a learner walks with his teacher, he ends up getting the same privileges and blessings as the teacher. Abraham is an example for all Christians who want to walk in faith (Gen 15:6). Abraham sustained Lot on their journeys; therefore, Lot sojourned with his uncle wherever he went.

Even though Lot was nurtured and nourished by Abraham, he still made a wrong decision by choosing the wrong path. He had not learned peace, humility, kindness, and the spirit of reconciliation for the entire period he stayed with Abraham. Lot went and dwelled in the plain of Jordan, a well-watered land in Sodom and

Gomorrah. Sodom is noted in the Bible because of her wicked and notorious behaviors (Gen 13:1-13). He was ensnared by Sodom and Gomorrah, and drawn to her vanities and ideologies. Soon after, a tragedy struck him, he was taken captive (Gen 14:12-17). Abraham, his uncle went and rescued him.

The lesson one can learn from this example is that sometimes wrong decisions will land a follower into bad consequences. Walking with someone requires empathy, love, forgiveness, and protection. Praying for your learner shows the spirit of affection and concern from the side of the trainer. Lot had all the privileges to enjoy, and continued blessings through Abraham, but he decided otherwise. His wrong decision made him lose everything he had acquired through Abraham. Here it is not the failure of Abraham but of his follower, Lot. The trainer should give space for the learner to make decisions on his own. One should not feel heartbroken when his learner makes a wrong decision, instead, he should pray for him.

### **The Children of Israel's Worship the Gold Calf**

The children of Israel's backsliding to the worship the gold calf came as a result of Moses' apparent delay coming down from the mountain (Exod 32:1-10). The people of God became impatient thus giving occasion to unfaithfulness in their hearts. Within such a short period, they broke God's promise to obey Him, but in the long run, God forgives their sin for a fresh beginning. Likewise, some will fail to be ready for the Lord when He appears the Second time. Many will say on that day, "My master is delaying his coming," and give way to wickedness (Luke 12:45-46).<sup>27</sup>

When Moses had gone to the mountain, he left Aaron as a priest to stand in his place in guiding people in the worship of God, who brought them from Egypt. The

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<sup>27</sup> Nichol, 664.

people had ample time, the forty days of waiting to meditate upon the wonderful acts of God's deliverance and what is about to be revealed. The Promised Land was awaiting them, and many other good things. Unfortunately, there were among them who were contemplating how to break God's laws and rebel against Him. They were weary of waiting for the Promised Land and thought themselves detained too long at Mount Sinai. The place where they had camped was very safe, well-fed, and well instructed but were impatient about moving forward. They demanded a physical god who would go before them. This is just a replica of the gods they used to worship in Egypt.<sup>28</sup>

For sure Moses had not informed them how long he would stay. Maybe according to them, he had overstayed and somehow, they must have thought that something wrong had befallen him. Instead of Aaron encouraging them to hold on till Moses comes, he succumbed to the pressure and made a gold calf for people to worship. This indicates that Aaron had also given up and lost hope in his brother's extended absence.

Paradoxically, while Moses was on the mountain to receive the stone tablets inscribed with the law of God and instructions regarding true worship; the people below were flagrantly disobeying the Lord through idol worship.<sup>29</sup> This apostasy corrupted them and strained their relationship with God their Creator and deliverer. It made God's wrath burn hot so much so that He decided to completely terminate them and make another nation with Moses. He regarded them as obstinate and unrestrained

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<sup>28</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy*, 2006, 320.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

people (Exod 32:9). This is a reminder from the flood when God was grieved for what people did.

Moses took a step to intercede for the children of Israel. There are some fundamental arguments Moses used to protest against God (1) He is the one who delivered them from Egypt. He cannot afford to destroy them, for His name's sake. (2) The heathen surrounding nations had heard about the wonderful deliverance of Israelites from Egypt. If, therefore God would destroy them, the heathen and Egyptians would rejoice and God would be dishonored. Furthermore, the Egyptians would rejoice that they have triumphed ultimately<sup>30</sup>. Instead of God taking them to sacrifice, He has sacrificed them. (3) Moses reminds (a means of showing his faith in who God was)<sup>31</sup> God of His promises to Abraham, that through him He will make a great nation. The promises had been partially fulfilled, and surely God would not fail to make good His word. In other words, how would He break His promises?<sup>32</sup>

Through Moses' pleading, God relented from destroying them, He forgave them. There comes a time when someone needs to stand in between the backslider and God to plead on his behalf and implore God not to destroy him before time. Many backsliders have lost the way, even though it may seem the right way for them. Their wayward path may lead them to eternal destruction. As Christians and church leaders, there is a dire need to intercede for the backsliders whom we cannot reach physically so that God's mercy and lovingkindness may prevail.

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<sup>30</sup> Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen, and H. Wayne House, *Nelson's NKJV Study Bible: NKJV, New King James Version*, Personal size (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2007), 158.

<sup>31</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, v. 2 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 672.

<sup>32</sup> Nichol, 666.

## **The Backsliding of Eli's Sons**

Eli was the priest of the Lord who spiritually nourished Samuel in the Tabernacle. While in the Tabernacle, Samuel had not yet known God fully, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him (1 Sam 3:7). The visions and dreams were rare and unknown. When Samuel was called by God three times, he could not recognize the voice of God. It is Eli who told him that when He calls again the fourth time, he should say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears' (vs. 9). This reveals that Eli had perceived that God was calling Samuel. Eli stepped back and gave room to Samuel to learn and experience on his own.

Eli left Samuel to encounter and experience God by himself; he only gave him simple instructions on how to respond when God calls again. A spiritual guide should be ready to explain to the younger believer what God means to him and what is expected of him. Eli stepped out of the scenes, never interrupted or intruded. He did not follow Samuel to go and listen to God together. He let the young Samuel go alone and listen to God's voice. The training style pictured here is directing a young trainee to focus on God, not on his spiritual father.

After God spoke to Samuel, it was his turn to deliver the message to his master. Even though difficult, young Samuel had to deliver the message without fear. Eli did not interpret, re-interpret, or paraphrase the message. This showed humility from the side of the spiritual father. Eli did not interfere with God's call; instead, he let God's course take effect without question. God's call to Samuel meant judgment to Eli's two sons.

On the other hand, Eli failed to passively or actively mentor his own two sons who were also priests. The sons of Eli were corrupt, contemptuous, and immoral in God's temple. Eli's sons are identified as "scoundrels" and "wicked men," they

showed disregard for the Lord (1 Sam 2:22-24). The failure of Eli's sons in their priestly duties is followed by a notice concerning Samuel's education as a priest. Eli had heard of his sons' despicable behavior; he even spoke strong words of warning to them but his words landed on deaf ears. Eli who is very old cannot exercise authority over these wanton sons.

The final phrase of 1 Sam.2:25 is difficult to understand that, "for it was the will of the Lord to kill them." The description of the sins of Eli's sons makes clear that they had chosen this particular path. The path of corruption represented by Eli's sons must end so that something new can begin for the life of Israel; God Himself had to kill them. However, as the two brothers committed evil deeds at the Tabernacles and invited God's judgment, Samuel served at the same Tabernacle and grew in God's favor (v. 26). Eli is charged with abuse of his priestly office concerning sacrifices and offerings and with honoring his sons more than God (v. 29). Perhaps Eli's sons were the prime offenders, but God's judgment charges Eli with complicity in their apostasy.<sup>33</sup>

Serving God in the sanctuary does not in any way make one relinquish his family responsibility as a father to admonish his sons. Eli abdicated this to his sons even when he knew that these boys had not become mature in their learning. He must have gotten the same reports that we read in the Bible about his sons. Being described as "sons of Belial" a phrase that describes worthless people who openly practiced lawlessness a synonym for Satan (2 Cor 6:15).

It is further stated that Hophni and Phineas, instead of ministering to the women who served at the door of the Tabernacle (v. 22), seduced them. True, these

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<sup>33</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. II, *Numbers to 2 Samuel* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 986-988.

women were not official servants appointed by law but were volunteers who assisted the priests and Levites perhaps caring for the little children who came with adult worshippers.<sup>34</sup> These women would have been the pious ones who had come just to be in the presence of the Lord. It was the duty of the priest to so conduct himself in line with the ministering relationship, otherwise, it would bring disaster and will not succeed.

The lessons to learn from Samuel, Eli, and his sons are that there are families which outwardly look not to be having all that it takes, but can still produce God-fearing children through good spiritual nourishment. Yet on the other hand, some families might have all they need, but end up producing children who don't fear God. Samuel was from a polygamous family; his parents did not have a perfect marriage. Samuel was fostered in God's Tabernacle in Shiloh; he advanced in wisdom, understanding, and deep faith. Growing in the sanctuary is not in itself a guarantee for spiritual development; it takes one's radical spiritual commitment. Eli's sons had backslidden from the ways of the Lord, but their father did not rebuke them in good time, thus making them sink into their wickedness. Parents should not sleep, relax, or neglect to continually instruct, exhort, rebuke, and admonish their children on the ways of the Lord. They should be spiritual role models in daily modeling and continually praying for them. Parents, pastors, and elders should not neglect spiritual guidance on their children at the expense of God's work. This is a case of failed priestly succession from father to children.

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<sup>34</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, ed., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (2001-2004), p

## **The Backsliding of King Saul**

Saul was installed into kingship after demands were made by the people against God's divine plan (1 Sam 8). Against that backdrop, Saul was anointed by the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 10:1) into kingship, and given all the mandate to govern and command the children of Israel. He was instructed to follow all of God's commands and statutes. No sooner was Saul installed to be the king over Israel than he transgressed His command by giving sacrifices unlawfully. He was rejected by God at the onset. Despite that, God gave him further instructions to kill all the Amalekites and utterly destroy all that they had and never to spare anything. The Amalekites were nomadic people who lived in the region of the Negev, the dry land South of Judah (Num 13:29).<sup>35</sup>

The Amalekites had laid wait for the Israelites when they came from Egypt, they attacked them at Rephidim, preventing them from entering their new land. It forced Moses to send out Joshua with the troops to go and fight them while he stood at the hill with his arms raised to the Lord for victory. It came to pass, and because of age, his arms got tired, Aaron and Hur, stood on either side to hold his arms not to drop till victory was realized (Exod 17:9-12).<sup>36</sup>

The command of God to Saul was clear through prophet Samuel, to smite Amalek, and slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel, and ass (1 Sam 15:2). This is a clear reflection of God's judgment upon the Amalekites because of their wrongdoings. The attack on the Amalekites is not defensive but punitive. Contrary to God's voice, Saul and his troops spared the Amalekite king and

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<sup>35</sup> Radmacher, Allen, and House, *Nelson's NKJV Study Bible*, 475.

<sup>36</sup> Francesca Aran Murphy, *1 Samuel*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2010), 134, 140.

kept the best of the spoils, precisely the things that should not have been kept according to the custom of the ban.<sup>37</sup>

Saul and his people backslid and disobeyed the commands of God and this thing grieved both Samuel and God, it made Samuel cry the whole night. When Samuel came to see him, he deceived him as he had done according to God's command. When Samuel asked about the sounds of the animals, he shifted his blame to his people. Samuel made it clear that it was his responsibility to make sure that God's commands were followed to the letter. Backsliding comes as a result of not following the voice and commands of God.

Saul's act of disobedience made God repent in His heart that he made Saul to be the king. God intended that if Saul could have been obedient, he would establish his kingdom. Because of his disobedience, now God would be forced to change His purpose and not establish the kingdom in his family genealogy.<sup>38</sup> Backsliding is a grievous sin against God and when one becomes adamant in his wayward way, God will reject him and all his descendants.

### **The Backsliding of King David**

After God had rejected Saul, he continued with his kingship but without His blessings, he eventually died with his sons on Mt. Gilboa in a fierce battle with the Philistines (1 Sam 31:1-6). God set his eyes upon David whom He calls, "a man after His own heart" (1 Sam 13:14). David was anointed by prophet Samuel into kingship at a very tender age, while he was still tending his father's flock. The first assignment

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<sup>37</sup> Joe O. Lewis, *1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles*, Layman's Bible Book Commentary, v. 5 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman Press, 1980), 43.

<sup>38</sup> Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), 255.

which he carried out was killing the Philistine by the name of Goliath who defied God and had become a threat to the Israelites including his brethren. The Spirit of God was upon him and he progressed very well despite the several obstacles put forth by Saul who even wanted to terminate him before ascending into power. Irrespective of all these, God established him into kingship.

David was anointed and made king in Hebron in the presence of the people of Judah. He began on a good platform, won several battles, and his fame spread across Judah and Israel who acknowledged him as their king. He captured Jerusalem where he made his city and named it after his name. He established strong economic and political securities. As he advanced in his kingship, on the other hand, he married more concubines and wives (2 Sam 5:13). He also brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and he reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people (2 Sam 8:15). He showed hospitality to Jonathan's (a longtime friend) crippled son Mephibosheth. He defeated the Ammonites and the Arameans.

There comes a paradigm shift, and a major turn out of events as described below: from the public to the personal, from power to vulnerability, from blessing to curse, from gift to grasp. David uses royal power abusively to satisfy his desires. Moreover, the violence he had earlier avoided (1 Sam 24-26) spirals out of control in his personal life. Adultery and deceit lead to murder (2 Sam 11), and the violence that stains his hands will spread to his own family (chaps 12-19).<sup>39</sup> Uriah who was the main target got killed in the hardest fighting, David sanitized the act by marrying Bathsheba whom he had impregnated before the death of her husband. It was crystal

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<sup>39</sup> *The New Interpreter's Bible. 2: Numbers, Deuteronomy, Introduction to Narrative Literature, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First and Second Books of Samuel*, Nachdr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 1283.

clear that David, “a man after God’s own heart,” pained the heart of God because of his immoral behaviors.

Although, indeed, David did not always live up to God’s standards, he was loyal to God and trusted Him implicitly, even when he was rebuked for his sins (2 Sam 12:13; Ps 32:1-5; 53:1-5).<sup>40</sup>

### **The Backsliding of King Solomon**

Solomon was anointed to be king over Israel and Judah through the instructions given by his father King David. His father instructed him to keep the charge of the Lord his God; to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it was written in the law of Moses, that he may prosper in all that he does. He should walk before God in truth with all his heart and with his soul (1 Kgs 2:1-4).

From the beginning, Solomon advanced very well in wisdom, greatness, splendor, and in good acts. God granted him wisdom, understanding, and much wealth. He arbitrated a difficult case (1 Kgs 3:16-28), he built the temple to God and the palace complex (1 Kgs 5-7; 2 Chr 3:1-14), he brought the Ark to the temple (1 Kgs 8), he dedicated the temple (1 Kgs 9) and of course, he also peacefully won many impending physical battles through nonviolence schemes. Many of the physical battles were fought by his father who shed much blood hence God forbade him from building the temple. Solomon was a king of peace, who only wanted to fight spiritual battles.

Chapter eleven of First Kings portrays the dark side of King Solomon’s backslidden life who desperately wanted to have peace and tranquility with the

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<sup>40</sup> Radmacher, 580.

neighboring nations to keep his kingship intact. He wanted to avoid conflicts and physical battles of any kind, thus opting to take up a softer strategy of marrying from nationals who were Israel's longtime enemies. The genesis of his fall and backsliding to idolatry came as a result of marriage alliances to many foreign women as well as the daughters of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the foreign nations whom the Lord had forbidden the children of Israel from intermarrying them lest they plunge their hearts into unholy covenants of other gods (Exod 34:16; Deut 7:3-4). Contrary to God's admonition of Solomon from his father, he lustfully married seven hundred wives, princes, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned his heart away from God (1 Kgs 11:1-3).

Solomon married Pharaoh's daughters and several other foreign women from the enemy tribes which were supposed to be driven out of the land of Canaan. His love and marriage to foreign women led him to build magnificent shrines for those idol gods. This completely breached his love for Yahweh, and instead of clinging to Yahweh as the law required (Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20; Exod 23:32-33), he clung to the foreign women and their gods. He became a multiculturalist and a manager of diversity. Automatically he was found in an awkward position of becoming a polytheist, even though no doubt he continued to think of Yahweh as the chief of his pantheon.<sup>41</sup>

When Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart after Ashtoreth, a Canaanite goddess of fertility (associated with sex), love, and war; Milcom who was the national god of the Ammonites; Chemosh, the national god of Moab and Molech, who was associated with human sacrifices and with Baal. The worship of all these

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<sup>41</sup> Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2006), 83-84.

foreign gods was associated with the burning of incense and sacrifices (1 Kgs 11:4-8). His heart was no longer committed and devoted to the Lord his God as the heart of his father David had been. God had not become the priority in his life.<sup>42</sup> All these gods and goddesses had become stumbling blocks for the children of Israel while in Canaan. That is the reason why God wanted these tribes to be banished from Canaan with their gods, to allow the Israelites to worship God without any excuse.

Through David, “a man after God’s own heart,” Solomon was to enjoy all the privileges and blessings promised by God on David’s lineage. God singled out Solomon by appearing to him twice (3:5; 9:2), he lacked neither proof nor confirmation of God’s love and power. He was given success in his endeavors beyond every expectation. He had been thoroughly instructed by his father and his father had poured his love and passion for the Lord and his dreams for the house that would reflect the glory of God. Regrettably, he hurled down all these privileges and passionately followed after other gods and idols. His fellowship with God diminished, and punishment was now impending according to the terms of the covenant with his father David.<sup>43</sup>

The children of Israel who were taken as the covenant people, through King Solomon did not live according to their covenant faithfulness which would have allowed blessings and safety, but their disobedience prompted a just God to punish them. However, Solomon’s sin began small and progressed in stages over time, it was fueled, and it began as a national disintegration that was at times slow but never

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<sup>42</sup> Radmacher, 580.

<sup>43</sup> Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: 1 Samuel-2 Kings*, Revised edition 3, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006), 730.

completely halted.<sup>44</sup> Indeed when sin or any wickedness is unchecked, it results to disastrous repercussions. God had appeared to Solomon twice (3:5; 9:2) to grant his request as well as warn him ahead of time to follow the ways of his father and keep God's statutes, judgments, commandments, and testimonies, to establish his throne forever. Otherwise, catastrophic disaster would strike him miserably and God would not be blamed for it.

Solomon's idolatry led him to self-alienation and devastating political consequences. His backslidden state is likened to the fall of Adam, when he listened to the voice of the serpent through his wife, he ate the forbidden fruit. Solomon the new Adam, falls into the trap of devotion to foreign women, which prompted Yahweh to raise adversaries. This led to the future division of the kingdom of Israel. (1 Kgs 11:14, 23).<sup>45</sup> As narrated above, Solomon's faults and weaknesses ended up affecting the entire nation of Israel which had enjoyed peace and material prosperity. This is what made God to turn His back on Solomon as well as the children of Israel, and this was the beginning of Israel's long journey to exile. There is nothing bad God hates like idolatry, turning away from Him, and becoming unfaithful as a woman to her covenantal husband. This arouses His wrath and makes Him turn His back on those who worship other gods and eventually destroy them.

Solomon committed three grievous blunders (1) he disobeyed the law of Moses and also violated the agreement he made with God (1 Kgs 3:4-14; 6:11-13; 9:1-9). (2) he went against Moses' law of marrying many wives as a king (Deut 17:17), and lastly (3) he developed a strong desire to amass wealth like other pagan

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<sup>44</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary, v. 8 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 165.

<sup>45</sup> Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 86.

kings (1 Kgs 10:23-26; cf Deut 17:16-20). All these contributed to his backsliding condition from the ways of his father and God's commands.

God's word remained, if Solomon would turn his heart back to God and follow all that his father admonished him, then God in his lovingkindness would have mercy on him and keep the promise He made with his father, to establish his throne for ages. Even though Israel and Judah were disintegrated, God kept the covenant he made with David by keeping the house of Judah with the lineage of David (11:13).

### **The Backsliding of Gehazi from Prophet Elisha**

After Elijah was taken to heaven, Elisha found Gehazi whom he would pass on the prophetic mantle to. Looking at the face value, Gehazi looked well, faithful, and determined to serve his master and follow his orders. He was Elisha's assistant, who went with him wherever he could go. He witnessed God's mighty acts through Elisha his master but failed in a very small and trivial thing. The first assignment: when the Shunammite woman's son died, Elisha sent Gehazi with his staff to go and raise the son but he failed to raise him.

Elisha therefore directed his Gehazi, "Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child" (2 Kgs 4:29-31). Elisha did not want to allow any external circumstance to be an excuse for his trainee's failure to perform the duty set upon him. He wanted the Shunammite family to know that the miracle of resurrection was connected with the divine Omnipotence through faith and prayer.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Old Testament Commentaries, Judges to Ezra* (Grands Rapids, MI: Associated Publishers and Authors Inc., n.d) 762-763.

Gehazi's first assignment and training flopped, but even when armed with the Prophet's rod he failed because of what was hidden in his heart. Elisha did not have more power than other prophets; the power itself comes from God who gives whoever He wills. Here we see a spiritual flaw on the side of the trainee. Indeed, if Gehazi could have been committed spiritually, there would be a spiritual flow from God to Elisha and then from Elisha to Gehazi. Unfortunately, the flow got disconnected and failure was imminent.

When Gehazi failed, Elisha entered the house, where the boy was lying dead on his bed, closed the door behind them, prayed, laid upon the boy eye to eye, mouth to mouth, hands to hands; and, stood, walked around probably praying and seeking God's power and intervention. He repeated it and the boy sneezed seven times and finally, the boy opened his eyes. The Bible does not explain, though, the significance of sneezing seven times; may be God's way of expelling something toxic from the lungs.

Gehazi witnessed the boy becoming alive. Elisha sent Gehazi to call the mother and Elisha handed him over to his mother in the presence of Gehazi. Gehazi was being nurtured to take up the mantle and become a prophet but he was hard of heart. This is one of the challenges that spiritual ministers experience. You are spiritually nurturing one who does not get and experience the very principles you are ingraining in them. It is only the grace of God that can impress and stamp the spiritual life of a person who has decided to follow Jesus Christ.

The training of Gehazi produced very little fruit. Another incident that exposed the Gehazi's weakness is the miraculous healing of Naaman, the Syrian Army Commander. Gehazi was wallowing in deception and unholy desires (Exod 20:17). He allowed his covetousness to overtake him and he wasted his opportunity. It

has been said that Gehazi believed that he would be a happier and better man if he took some gifts from Naaman and that he had the right to do so being the servant of the great Prophet in Israel.

These gifts would weaken the testimony of Elisha as a prophet for God in Israel. Yet Gehazi on receiving these gifts (2 Kgs 5:20) said “as the Lord lives” pretending to be a God-fearing man thus using the name of God carelessly for private gain and being controlled by greed. There should be an effective turning away from the old ways to new and living ones in the one being disciplined and mentored for ministry. The followers of Christ should be led to place their dependence upon the Master Jesus Christ and solely so because they would be disappointed when they place it on other things like craving for wealth and fame.

Gehazi never let loose his heart from the entanglement of greed that gripped his heart. His lips were filled with lies and he was very far from enjoying the “Shalom” with which he saluted Naaman. He used God’s work as “a cloak of covetousness” (1 Thess 2:1-6) which can confuse a young believer. Gehazi lacked a maturing spiritual experience. His lies continued to Elisha his master (vv. 25-27). He had forgotten that “all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Neh 4:13 cf Ps 13:7-12). This also is one of the challenges encountered when someone is being disciplined to become a follower of Christ.

The lessons we learn from Elisha and Gehazi are that Gehazi was not fully committed to Elisha, his master. His heart was not pure, hence could not experience the manifestations of God’s power in his life. Instead of seeking the presence of God in his life, he sought incentives. Elisha was the prophet of God who was trained by Prophet Elijah; the prophetic baton was to be handed over to Gehazi but failed because of covetousness. A learner can fall disastrously if his focus is on material

benefits instead of spiritual empowerment. There are repercussions for whoever does not follow the training of the trainer to the letter. Being a follower requires self-control and discipline of the heart. Here is the case of failed prophetic succession between Prophet Elisha and Gehazi.

### **Backsliding in the New Testament**

#### **Judas Iscariot's Betrayal of Jesus**

Jesus knew from the onset who would betray him, He even warned, but in vain. He observed that the one who would eat with Him and dip his hand into the bowl with Him, who has washed his hands with Him, will betray Him. This could have served as a warning to Judas that the plot is already known, to restrain him from carrying out the plan. The very gesture of cleanliness becomes a sign of betrayal. Jesus pronounces woe on the one who betrays the Son of Man; it would have been better if he had not been born (Matt 26:24). Judas' betrayal, however, could not deter Jesus from accomplishing His mission.<sup>47</sup>

Judas was one of the disciples called by Jesus for the ministry of proclaiming the gospel. He too had walked with Jesus for three and half years, ate with him, and witnessed everything Jesus did: healing, casting out demons, feeding, calming the storm, teaching, and preaching to the multitudes. Despite all these, he allowed the devil to manipulate the desires of his heart, the love of money overclouded his mind, and decided to betray his master. Though outwardly he had remained with the disciples, inwardly he had departed from Jesus (Matt 26:14-16, 21-25). The chief priests wanted to take hold of Jesus and silence him, but they didn't know how to go about their plan. How would they take Jesus into custody without provoking a popular

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<sup>47</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2015), 217-218.

revolt in His favor? Judas offered himself to solve the dilemma of the leaders in Jerusalem. The payment for the deal was thirty pieces of silver, accordingly, be about one twenty days' wages. Thirty shekels of silver was also the traditional price of a slave (Exod 21:32) as predicted by Zechariah 11:12.<sup>48</sup>

The Jewish leaders desired to arrest Jesus in secret, and if at all possible, not during the Passover feast, to avoid rioting from the big crowd. This sets the context for Judas watching for an opportune time to betray Jesus to the authorities, presumably at night and outside the city to avoid public arrest in front of a sympathetic crowd.<sup>49</sup> Judas was driven by greed and a strong desire for money which could not give him another second thought. This brings into play two contrasting things; Jesus was propagating the Kingdom of God and Judas was promoting the contrary kingdom controlled by money and selfish interest.

To clear the air, each of the twelve disciples asked in turns, is it I? Even Judas himself also asked the same but added, Rabbi. Jesus affirmed the answer in the hearing of the twelve. This affirmation was to suggest to the traitor that his treacherous plan was known and was meant to create an opportunity for Judas to withdraw from his course of treachery before its absolute and final exposure.<sup>50</sup> The disciples were shocked beyond reasonable doubt that one of them would betray their master and didn't know how to go about it. This could not stop Judas from carrying out his treacherous plan, he ultimately got an opportune time. Jesus had gone with his three disciples to Gethsemane to pray. After the prayer, as He was coming out of the

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<sup>48</sup> Nichol, 519.

<sup>49</sup> Jeannine K. Brown, *Teach the Text Commentary Series: Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2015), 294.

<sup>50</sup> Willoughby C. Allen, *The International Critical Commentary: St. Matthew*, Third (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1965), 276.

garden, he was met with Judas and a crowd of Jewish leaders who apprehended him and took him for trial and later crucifixion (26:36-50).

The panorama of Judas' betrayal plan was revealed before him and the disciples as well. This could have created an opportunity and a good platform for him to repent his ways and stick to Jesus, but in vain. His backsliding condition deteriorated with time and he became more stubborn because of the payment he was given. Money can drive a believer away from Jesus and eventually destroy his life for eternity.

No concrete reason prompted him to betray his master, perhaps he was disappointed in the direction of Jesus' ministry and wished to force his hand by having him arrested. Maybe he was looking at the establishment of a national-political kingdom that would end the Roman domination over Israel. Whatever must have offended him, it cannot be substantiated. We must avoid, however, making Judas into a kind of unconscious hero of the faith for his role in initiating the process against Jesus that led to the redemptive event of the cross. Judas' betrayal was a sinister deed and is only spoken of in such terms by Jesus. Because God can use such a deed in accomplishing his will does not turn into a commendable one, nor are we to think of Judas as a kind of saint.<sup>51</sup> Whatever Judas did was evil and only done by a backsliding heart. No wonder he irreversibly committed suicide because of guilt conscious.

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<sup>51</sup> Donald A. Hagner and Bruce Manning Metzger, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, Nachdr., Vol. 33B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 762.

## **The Disciples Forsook Jesus**

The disciples were unwilling to submit to the experience Christ was about to suffer, thus forsaking and leaving Jesus alone to fight his own battle (Matt 26:56).<sup>52</sup> When Jesus was drawing near to the cross and crucifixion, there was a turn of events that began in Galilee. Until this time, He had been widely acknowledged as a popular teacher and prophet. Disappointingly, as He stood in the shadow of the cross, many of his followers abandoned him (John 6:66).<sup>53</sup>

## **Peter's Denial of Jesus**

Jesus profoundly predicted to all His disciples that they would stumble and leave Him (Matt 26:31-32). Peter responded and vowed that even if all would leave Jesus, he would not dare to forsake Him whatsoever (26:33). When Jesus was betrayed and handed over to the chief priests and rulers of the day, things started rolling out on a different track. Jesus was taken before the Sanhedrin which comprised of the chief priest, scribes, elders, and council members. Peter was following from a distance, he entered into the courtyard, sat down, and watched to see the end of the matter beforehand (26:58).

The trial began and was progressing very well, Peter was warming himself before a fire kindled in the courtyard, unaware of what was awaiting him. A woman doorkeeper who had admitted Peter paused a question to him that he had been with Jesus, leading Peter to his first denial. Peter had completely forgotten the warning given by Jesus and he thought he would be unrecognized, and even joined the crowd in their disrespectful funny remarks concerning Jesus. It is in the record that all of

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<sup>52</sup> Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: Matthew-John*, vol. 5 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 528.

<sup>53</sup> Nichol, 972-973

Peter's three denials took place during the first trial before the Sanhedrin, probably between 3:00 and 5:00A.M.<sup>54</sup>

One of the accusers who identified Peter was a servant of the high priest, a kinsman of Malchus, whose ear he had severed. Peter denied Jesus in fear that he might also be taken into custody if his identity could be discovered. Fortunately, as the cock crew, Peter remembered Jesus' warning, went out and burst into tears, a sign of sorrowful repentance. All was not lost; the Savior's love and forgiveness brought him safely through this tragic experience.<sup>55</sup>The Apostle Peter was a backslider indeed when he denied his Lord three times with oaths and cursings. He had walked, eaten, stayed, and ministered with Jesus for three and half years, how dare he deny his Master? Yet we all know how tenderly the Lord sought his restoration. This is a reminder that any believer can be caught in the same scenario unaware, Paul admonishes us that he who thinks he is standing in faith should be careful lest he falls (1 Cor 10:12).

### **John Mark Deserting Paul**

After parting ways, Barnabas took John Mark to be his fellow laborer. Paul and Barnabas wanted to go back and visit the brethren in places they had preached before. Before they could set, a dispute arose because of John Mark whom Paul claims had deserted them earlier during their first missionary journey at Pamphylia and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 12:25; 13:13). John Mark was a cousin to Barnabas (Col 4:10). Undoubtedly it was Barnabas' family relationship with John that led him to wish to take the young man once more on a missionary tour, to allow him to show

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<sup>54</sup> Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: Matthew-John*, vol. 5 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 532-532.

<sup>55</sup> Nichol, 532.

his fitness for service. Despite them being related, Barnabas' main concern was to nurture the young Christian John Mark despite his weaknesses and help him grow in faith as well as in his commitment to serve God just as he previously did for Paul.

Doubtless, he recognized, as Paul did not, circumstances that at least in part excused John Mark's former turning back from an arduous task. To Paul, the earnest and courageous warrior for Christ, anyone who had so acted seemed, in the Lord's own words, not "fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62), and needed discipline, of rejection at least for a time, to fit himself for further work.<sup>56</sup> It is not clear why John Mark returned and left Paul and Barnabas. It could be homesick or since they were moving to more difficult areas, he was not ready to face challenges. John Mark was a devout Jew, and he might have felt uncomfortable with Paul's mission to the Gentiles. Paul was becoming popular in the mission field, and he might have felt uncomfortable that he was overshadowing his cousin Barnabas, he could not take it. Whichever reason, these are just my assumptions.

Because of this contention, two missionary journeys were undertaken instead of one and God's intended work was accomplished. Paul complements Barnabas in his epistles as a committed servant who labored with his hands without support from the churches (1 Cor 9:6; Gal 2:1, 9). Later after Barnabas had nurtured and mentored John Mark and was fit for the ministry, now Paul recommends him as "profitable" to him for the ministry (2 Tim 4:11; Phil 1:24). Paul must have had an opportunity to labor with John Mark once again, or maybe he heard good tidings about his success in the ministry, even though he had rejected him before. We need not give up on

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<sup>56</sup> Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol.6, *Acts to Ephesians* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 317.

anybody in the ministry, we need to strengthen the weak, encourage them, and give them time, opportunity, and space to grow.

The lessons we can learn from Barnabas and John Mark are that for someone to be profitable in God's vineyard, one needs time, patience, love, empathy, sympathy, kindhearted spirit, and tolerance. When you want to mentor, disciples, nurture, and retain someone in the ministry and church as well; it is a risk-taking job because sometimes you are forced to take up a failure and train him to become profitable. There are times when ministry exposes one to sharp criticism, never be discouraged, and move on. This is a case of a failure and unprofitable gospel worker who later became profitable after being mentored.

### **Peter's Double Standard Behaviors**

Peter was sent to preach the gospel to the circumcised and Paul to the uncircumcised. Before the Antiochian episode, there was a meeting that took place according to the vast majority of commentators. Antioch was a famous Syrian city located on the Orontes River, which was the third largest city of the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. Since it was a metropolis city, Jews were among the original settlers in the city founded by Seleucus. The Acts of the Apostles and the dispersion of the Hellenistic Jewish Christians, first brought about the Christian gospel to Antioch, starting with the Jews, but soon it spread to the Gentiles within their outreach as well.<sup>57</sup>

The following are stages to Antioch's plot: (1) Peter's practice of eating with Gentile believers before a delegation from Jerusalem arrived; (2) Peter's withdrawal

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<sup>57</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *World Biblical Commentary: Galatians*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, David Allen Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker, vol. 41 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2015), 64-70.

from the table fellowship with Gentile believers after the delegation from Jerusalem arrived; (3) the separation of Jewish believers from Gentile believers as a result of Peter's withdrawal, with "even Barnabas" joining the separation; (4) Paul's evaluation of the situation, crediting Peter's withdrawal as an act of hypocrisy based on fear and Barnabas' action in following Peter's example as based on irrational emotion; and (5) Paul's open denunciation of Peter.<sup>58</sup>

Peter's responsibility in Antioch was, him being the apostle of the circumcision, he was bound to take peculiar concern in the salvation of the Jews, to preach the gospel to the circumcised. While Paul was sent to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, doing vice versa could contaminate the gospel in one way or another. He went contrary to the mission that he was sent to carry out in Antioch. He was not doing any justice to the Gentiles by fellowshipping with them, in compelling them to keep the law, from the obligations of which he wished himself to be exempted. In a normal life situation, every man should keep the law that he commands others to keep. Peter's conduct was unbecoming because he was compelling the Gentiles to observe the Jewish ceremonies, while, he being a Jew, left himself at liberty.<sup>59</sup>

This was the point of departure that indebted Paul to reprimand him publicly. The approach is echoed by Paul, that those who are sinning openly should be rebuked publicly to serve as a lesson for others to learn, for the sake of instilling fear and decorum in people's conduct (1 Tim 5:20).

Paul's main concern was not even about food with the Gentiles, but about fellowship. Peter was before against sharing with the Gentiles, here he is now eating

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<sup>58</sup> Longenecker, 64-70.

<sup>59</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Galatians and Ephesians*, ed. Henry Beveridge, trans. James Anderson et al., 500th anniversary ed (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2009), 63-65.

with them, and retreating thereafter for fear. If they could not sit down and share a meal, how could they share the Lord's Supper and gospel together? There was also discrimination against the uncircumcised by the circumcised, and poor by the rich people who ate presumptuous meals, leaving the poor hungry. Paul's words imply that Peter must have tended to customarily share with the Gentiles and withdraw for his convenience, behaving like a Pharisee. He was a hypocrite, a pretender, an actor, and insincere in his actions.<sup>60</sup> This is what provoked Paul to rebuke him in front of people because it was injuring the Christian family as a whole. Indeed, when one acts and behaves indifferently, it damages Christian perspectives and hinders one from walking the talk.

Peter's acknowledgment of correction, even though he was senior to Paul in age and standing, with humility he accepted Paul's rightful rebuke and defense of the gospel. As a Christian when you have backslidden, with humility of heart you need to accept and change his crooked ways. Furthermore, the Jerusalem meeting had already decided that the Gentiles should not be compelled to live like Jews, because salvation was by faith alone.

Paul's concern to Peter was, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it then you compel Gentiles to follow Jewish customs (2:14)?" He accused Peter and others of doing the opposite of what they claimed to believe and not acting in line with the truth of the gospel.<sup>61</sup> Peter was holding here and there at the same time, and his ministry would not become effective at all. He would have lived up to his conviction and still carried out the ministry as per the laid down Jewish

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<sup>60</sup> Earl S. Johnson, Jr, *Basic Bible Commentary: Galatians and Ephesians* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1994), 36-38.

<sup>61</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo, ed., *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1rst publ. (Nairobi: Word Alive Publ. [u.a.], 2006), 1418-1419.

standards to avoid conflicts of interest. His double standards would make the Gentiles to forsake Christianity completely. Hypocrisy is the poisonous fruit of backsliding which would discourage many Christians from joining the church.

### **Galatians Backsliding to False Teachings**

First and foremost, Paul preached to the Galatian churches a crystal-clear gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As soon as he left, false teachers invaded the Galatian churches with another false gospel of salvation by faith and good works. The Galatians were soon abandoning God and giving allegiance to false teachers (1:6-10). He was bewildered that it was overtaking them very soon from the time they accepted the true gospel from him and their turning away from it and from Christ. The false teachers' strategies were to sow seeds of confusion, causing the Galatians to desert Christ and accept a different and perverted gospel. They were really making quick inroads, thus propelling Paul to write a letter or admonition to them.<sup>62</sup> Paul clearly says here that turning away from the true gospel could become worthless and a disgrace against Christ Jesus.

False teachings and doctrines can lead people into backsliding, leaving the right foundational teachings to false and misleading unbiblical teachings. Backsliding can happen to an individual or a whole church congregation. Believers should remain vigilant and check it from time to time—close all the evil avenues by praying and thoroughly studying the Bible. The church should have a group Bible study program from time to time.

Secondly, the Galatians were not only being misled by the false teachers, but they had also turned to legalism, and strict adherence to the law to earn salvation.

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<sup>62</sup> Adeyemo, 1414.

They had forsaken what they were taught about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which was the climax of Jesus' obedience as he presented himself as an atoning sacrifice. They had heard his message of free and complete salvation received through faith in Christ and had accepted it. The reason for their backsliding from the true message was unclear to Paul. Paul was astonished so much so that he had to use a cultural idiom (who has bewitched you) to emphasize that the change in their attitudes was so unexpected that some people might attribute it to the influence of demonic powers (3:1). He reminded them that they received the Holy Spirit free of cost.<sup>63</sup>

The third aspect that disturbed Paul was their turning to idol worship (4:8-11). He reminded them of their former enslavement to polytheism. He confronts their inappropriateness of turning to some religious expressions which are but weak and miserable, which is now been superseded by their position in Christ Jesus. Their observations of some Jewish traditions will refute all that he had done among them, which will indicate that nothing has progressed since he left. And by clinging to legalism, they will remain redundant in their growth and behave childishly.<sup>64</sup>

Last but not least, Paul is baffled by their deliberate mixing of works to faith, that is, consideration of circumcision and the uncircumcision. The false teachers confused them by telling them to add circumcision to their faith; this is a theological problem not ceremonial. Paul emphatically says that we are saved through faith rather than by good works; but faith is not merely intellectual conviction, as if a Christian

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<sup>63</sup> Adeyemo, 1420.

<sup>64</sup> Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill, eds., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, [Enhanced Credo edition] (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2014), 1348.

could do as he wishes as long as he believes properly. To believe is to place one's confidence in Christ, who loves us and gave himself for us.<sup>65</sup>

### **Demas Backsliding and Forsaking Paul**

Initially, Demas was associated with Paul in proclaiming the gospel of Christ, he was even with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment. But for fear of suffering, humiliation, and even death, since Paul was a prisoner, he forsook him (backslid) and went on a separate way. He was now being called from his ministry by secular affairs, in which he entangled himself; his first love for Christ and His gospel was forsaken and forgotten, and he fell in love with the world. He went off, departed to Thessalonica, called thither perhaps by trade, or by some other worldly business.<sup>66</sup> He could not have assisted Paul without many troubles and vexations, attended by imminent risk of his life; he was exposed to many reproaches, and must have submitted to many insults, and being constrained to leave off the care of his affairs; and, therefore, being overcome by his dislike of the cross, he resolved to consult his interests.<sup>67</sup> His courage was put to the test, and his name, like the names of Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1:20), is remembered only in pity and disgrace.<sup>68</sup>

Lessons to learn from their experience are that Demas is an example of backsliding from being a coworker of Paul in proclaiming the gospel of Christ. He was not ready to sacrifice his life for his fellow minister. He was like the seed that fell among the thorns (Matt 13:7, 22), it sprang up and was choked by the thorns. Demas

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<sup>65</sup> Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans-Galatians*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1976), 489.

<sup>66</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 685.

<sup>67</sup> Jean Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, ed. Henry Beveridge, trans. James Anderson et al., 500th anniversary ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 264.

<sup>68</sup> Nichol, *The Seventh-Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 350.

was choked by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. While following his fellow minister and trainer, he failed disastrously. In the process of training and mentoring followers, never feel discouraged, be satisfied that you have done your level best, and go ahead and get another person to nurture, disciple, coach, and counsel. In the course of the discipling exercise, be cautious not to let one another down. Ministry expedition requires sacrifice.

### **Writings of Ellen G. White on the Role of the Father: The Lawmaker and Priest**

In early times the male father was the ruler and priest of his own family, and he exercised authority over his children, even after they had families of their own. His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head, in both religious and secular matters. This patriarchal system of governance Abraham endeavored to perpetuate, as it tended to preserve the knowledge of God. It was necessary to bind the household members together, to build up a barrier against the idolatry that had become so widespread and deep-seated. Abraham sought by every means in his power to guard the inmates of his encampment against mingling with the heathen and witnessing their idolatrous practices, for he knew that familiarity with evil would insensibly corrupt the principles. The greatest care was exercised to shut out every form of false religion and to impress the mind with the majesty and glory of the living God as the true object of worship.<sup>69</sup>

The male father represents the divine Lawgiver in his family. He is the laborer together with God, carrying out the gracious designs of God and establishing in his children upright principles. He was vested with the responsibility to mentor successful

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<sup>69</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarch and Prophets*, (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2001), 141.

generations. This is crucial in enabling them to form pure virtuous characters as well as follow their Master. This helps the student to be preoccupied with that which will enable these learners or children in their souls to render obedience not only to their earthly parent but also to their heavenly Father. This model was established in Israel. Although we see much of the teachings done by mothers it was the prerogative of the fathers to minister to the spiritual needs of their children, especially to the boys.

The father is in one sense the priest of the household and is expected to place upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice on behalf of the house church. Morning and evening the father, as a priest of the household, confesses to God the sins committed by himself, his wife, and his children through the day.<sup>70</sup>

Ellen White further admonishes that among the publicans a widespread interest was created. Their hearts were drawn toward the divine Teacher. In the joy of his new discipleship, Matthew longed to bring his former associates to Jesus. Accordingly, he made a feast at his own house and called together his relatives and friends. Not only were publicans included, but many others who were of doubtful reputation, and were proscribed by their more scrupulous neighbors.<sup>71</sup> After inviting Jesus to his home, he got the full knowledge of Jesus and he longed to take the newfound message and knowledge to those who had had no privilege of meeting Jesus personally. Jesus accepted the invitation and that provided Matthew with an opportunity to be closer to the source of knowledge. Men should be allowed to meet with Jesus for a full disclosure of their heart desires so that they burn within themselves for God.

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<sup>70</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001), 212.

<sup>71</sup> Ellen G. White, *A Call to Stand Apart* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 16.

## Ellen G. White's Writings on Backsliding

Ellen G. White's literature has a lot of vast information on backsliding. Her approaches are Biblically oriented with in-depth explanations of the backsliding of members. Her writings focused on both the Jewish nation and the Christian church at the time of Jesus, the disciples, and thereafter. She wrote beginning from the patriarchs, prophets, priests, kings, and church leaders of the day. Her writings were inspired by God himself through the Holy Spirit and visions and dreams. Her writings are lesser light leading us to the greater light (Bible).<sup>72</sup>

Christ told the Jews at Nazareth a fearful truth when He declared that with backsliding Israel there was no safety for the faithful messenger of God. They would not know his worth or appreciate his labors. While the Jewish leaders professed to have great zeal for the honor of God and the good of Israel, they were enemies of both. By precept and example, they were leading the people farther and farther from obedience to God—leading them where He could not be their defense in the day of trouble.<sup>73</sup> They enjoyed the status quo, being the children of Abraham and the chosen nation by God Himself, they would have a free ticket to God's heavenly Kingdom. Little did they know that their behaviors had made them backslide and be distant from God. They had grown deep into legalism and were blinded from knowing and following the truth of the Bible. That is why Jesus called their leaders a brood of vipers (Matt 12:34-35; 23:33) and blind leaders (Matt 15:14).

Ellen G. White was filled with sadness when she thought of our condition as a people. The Lord has not closed heaven to us, but our course of continual backsliding

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<sup>72</sup> T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018), 364.

<sup>73</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles: In the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2005), 417.

has separated us from God. Pride, covetousness, and love of the world have lived in the heart without fear of banishment or condemnation. Grievous and presumptuous sins have dwelt among us. And yet the general opinion is that the church is flourishing and that peace and spiritual prosperity are in all her borders. The church has turned back from following Christ her leader, and is steadily retreating toward Egypt. Yet few are alarmed or astonished at their want of spiritual power. Doubt and even disbelief of the testimonies of the Spirit of God are leavening our churches everywhere. Satan would have it thus.<sup>74</sup>

Upon all new converts should be impressed the truth that abiding knowledge can be gained only by earnest labor and persevering study. As a rule, those who are converted to the truth we preach have not previously been diligent students of the Scriptures; for in the popular churches, there is little real study of the Word of God. The people look to the ministers to search the Scriptures for them and to explain what they teach.<sup>75</sup> When new converts are not taken through the class baptism bible study program, yes, they will be baptized, but with no spiritual roots. They will soon wither and backslide, and go back to their former lives of sin. This is a clarion call for church leaders to put in place a study class for the new members, before and after baptism. Teaching of Scriptures should be done every Sabbath, in the morning and afternoon, to keep the church spiritually strong.

Jesus calls to every wanderer, “My son, give Me your heart” (Prov 23:26). “Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings” (Jer 3:22). The youth cannot be truly happy without the love of Jesus. He is waiting with pitying

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<sup>74</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1948), 217.

<sup>75</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 367.

tenderness to hear the confessions of the wayward young people, and to accept their penitence. He watches for some return of gratitude from them, as the mother watches for the smile of recognition from her beloved babe. The great God teaches us to call Him Father. He would have us understand how earnestly and tenderly His heart yearns over us in all our trials and temptations. “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him” (Ps 103:13). The mother might sooner forget her child, but God could not forget one soul that trusts Him.<sup>76</sup>

God is interested in all people; young and old, irrespective of color, tribe, or gender. He is neither partial nor respectful of persons. Let not the young feel that He has forsaken them, due to their bad behaviors. He is merciful, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness. Because of His mercies, we are not consumed, and He has not paid us according to our sins. He is waiting for the backsliding, like the prodigal son who wandered away, when he returned home, his father welcomed him and gave him a feast.

The Savior foretold the state of backsliding that would exist just before his second advent. He compared, the day to that of Noah when people would be going on with their businesses – buying, selling, planting, marrying, and giving in marriage – with forgetfulness of God and the future life. For those living at this time, Christ’s admonition is: “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you unawares.” “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:34,

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<sup>76</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for All Who Are “Laborers Together with God,”* Rev. and enl. ed (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Pub. Association, 2005), 209.

36).<sup>77</sup> The call to the Christian family, we should be vigilant throughout our lives lest we be caught unawares.

The minister's backsliding from God and secret sins or mistakes should not be confessed publicly. This would give our enemies occasion to cast reflections upon the whole ministry. It is Satan's object to ensnare men who handle sacred things, that he may lead them to do things that will bring the ministry down on a level with common things, so that sinners may be furnished with an excuse for their impenitence and sin. Ministers should not create an avenue for the name of God to be blasphemed.<sup>78</sup>

All human beings are vulnerable to backsliding, irrespective of the status and title one holds. When David did evil, prophet Nathan went to him privately and David did not call everybody for him to confess. He cried to God privately, even though he came to write about it for our admonition.

### **Summary**

The chapter discusses the biblical and theological foundations of the backslider. It begins by providing biblical examples of those who backslid and fell from the presence of God and from God's laid down commands, statutes, precepts, testimonies, ordinances, and oracles in both the Old and New Testaments. Following this, it includes the writings of Ellen G. White, which feature the role of the father in Christian families and address backsliding. Backsliding has always existed since the very beginning. It is impossible to have an individual or a church that is 100% perfect. The main principles are love, patience, care, forgiveness etc. Information is sourced

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<sup>77</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2005), 309.

<sup>78</sup> Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Ministerial Association, GC, 1997), 50.

from Bible Commentaries, Encyclopaedias, Bible Dictionaries, and Ellen G. White's writings.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **The Concept of Backsliding**

Backsliding according to Baker Illustrated Bible dictionary is a deliberate turning away from and rejection of God. This language is found most frequently in the OT, especially in Jeremiah, where warnings are often accompanied by God's invitations to his people to repent and return from their sinful ways.<sup>1</sup> This is simply turning your back on God.

Backsliding is a phenomenon whereby every believer is disposed to, and children of God need deliverance. This is a recurrent problem for most of the churches today; a real pastoral problem that is also biblical and relevant to all Christians across denominational and religious affiliations. If Christians become careless in their lives, then they will be dragged down into a state of backsliding. There is every possibility for even a well-known believer to become cold and shrink from the call to live for Christ's honor and glory.

Many Christians are living in a state of resigned life, they are unable to embrace the light of the gospel in their darkest night. They are going through conflicts, temptations, failure, and discouragements in the name of the gospel of Christ. Some have been denied and betrayed by their own family and fellow church members. The result of this condition is loss of faith, hopelessness, despair, doubt,

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<sup>1</sup> Tremper Longman III, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Mi: BakerBooks, 2013), 161.

and fear of the unknown. Someone becomes weak spiritually and worn out psychologically, and then one drops by the wayside and quits the spiritual race. Christians should be made to understand that Christ has gone through the same rugged and thorny road and won the race, when we fix our eyes upon Him and press on, victory is guaranteed.

Joel Beeke asserts that one must press on, firm in the confidence that one runs alongside other believers, that they run a well-trodden course, and that they run with God's inexhaustible assistance and support. Believers have a race to run and every true Christian must endure great opposition. Otherwise, there will be fightings without, fears within; there will be snares to be avoided, and temptations to be resisted; there will be your treacherous hearts, often cold and dead and dry and dull; there will be friends who will give you unscriptural advice, and relations who will even war against your soul; in short, there will be stumbling-blocks on every side, there will be occasion for all one's diligence and watchfulness and godly jealousy and prayer, one will soon find that to be a real Christian is no light matter.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, backsliding according to Algernon James Pollock is a failure in testimony and practical Christian living, resulting in a believer walking in a way dishonoring the Lord. For such, sad as it is to backslide, there is a road open to restoration by true repentance and confession.<sup>3</sup> As explained above a backslider is someone who was once baptized and has fallen back and is no longer coming to church. Someone who is not walking in the way of faith. One who neither attends

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<sup>2</sup>Joel R. Beeke, *Getting Back to the Race: The Cure for Backsliding* (Adelphi, Maryland: Cruciform Press, 2011), 9-10. <https://cruciformpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Getting-Back-in-the-Race.pdf>. Accessed 6 February 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Algernon James Pollock, *The Difference Between Backsliding and Apostasy*. (2023).

weekly church services nor participates in church programs of any kind. A believer walking in a wayward and evil way, following the wicked parts.

### **The Signs of Backsliding**

God's children are prone to follow the tracks of their muddy human nature as acknowledged by Joel R. Beeke, following those tracks wherever they lead. The further they go, the deeper they sink into the ruts, step by step, one thing leading to another, until they get stuck. What are these ruts believers are so inclined to fall into? They include but are not limited to Coldness in prayer, indifference under the word, growing inner corruptions, the love of the world, declining love for believers, and man-centered hopes.<sup>4</sup> The seriousness of prayer, confessions, petitions, and claiming of God's promises gradually fades away. Before one realizes it, prayers become more a matter of words than heart. Praying with lips but not with an intense desire of the soul.

Beeke continues to explain that Indifference under the Word will draw back someone from God, one's passion towards God cools down, which eventually leads one to lose all concern for truth. Losing affection for God's Word reveals a lack of spiritual health and forecasts further decline. The Bible asserts, "As new-born babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Pet 2:2). Physically, someone is in the sanctuary, but spiritually the soul abides in the outer courts of the temple. There is a lack of heart-searching, no wonder that worship services become a burden rather than a delight. The whole amount of piety is left cold, heartless, and

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<sup>4</sup> Beeke, *Getting Back to the Race* 22.

dead formality. Dryness under the Word also implies backsliding from him who is the living and eternal Word.<sup>5</sup>

Growing inner Corruption is another sign of backsliding as observed by Beeke. The secret sins of the heart begin to multiply as one neglects to put them to death. There is a loss of a burning desire to search God and to allow Him to search one's heart and see if there will be any wicked way in a person, to lead someone in the way everlasting (Ps 139:23-24). Instead, somebody conceals the evidence of his/her sin, hiding from God and blaming others for personal failures and mistakes.<sup>6</sup> This situation will possibly lead to pretence, hypocrisy, and spiritual unconsciousness, and one is caught in the state of backsliding unexpectedly. There will be no self-introspection, no prayer, and no study of God's word.

The love of the world as further explained by Beeke leads to an increase in worldliness as one of the signs of backsliding. In everyday life, in conversation, in eating and drinking, in dressing and fashion, the spirit of the world begins to take hold of an individual. When the world fills someone's thoughts, it will entangle one's affection for God.<sup>7</sup>

The overriding concern explained above is that instead of one walking away from the dictates of the world, an individual and the world stand on the same platform and have several things in common. One's heart is so much consumed by the pleasures of the world than the desire for godliness. Worldly matters that control people include worldly music, immoral behaviors, indecent dressing, love of money,

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<sup>5</sup> Beeke, *Getting Back to the Race* 24-26.

<sup>6</sup> Beeke, *Getting Back to the Race* 27.

<sup>7</sup> Beeke, *Getting Back to the Race* 30

politics, unhealthy relationships, and intemperance. All of these drive one to backslide.

Backsliding declines and dispels brotherly love from amongst people as portrayed by Beeke. Somebody disagrees over nominal matters with fellow believers, unwilling to set down personal preferences for believers' sake, and those disagreements grow into big fights (James 4:1). As piety thus dies in the soul, charity diminishes and censoriousness takes its place. Christians become strangers and enemies to one another, and conflicts, troubles, disputes, and selfishness multiply.<sup>8</sup> Backsliding indeed, as portrayed in this study has baggage full of issues including gossip and backbiting. Normally in a Christian arena, Christians are supposed to run the spiritual race with one another, but now the opposite is true, running against one another or in parallel with one another.

Finally, Beeke concludes by saying that God is supposed to be the center of our worship and praise, nonetheless, Satan has contaminated the minds of the people so much so that they now become the center of hope in the church and the subject matter. Many people are now being idolized and God and his Word are put aside.<sup>9</sup> That means that there are more compliments and praises for human beings in most of the church congregations; some still are immersed with several titles ascribed to them. Men are just worshiped through the way they are treated by others. Spiritual leaders have brainwashed their followers so much so that instead of directing them to trust in the living God, they are the ones who are being trusted now. They are taken to be next to God, therefore they should pray on behalf of others and inspire hope for their followers. People have stopped praying because spiritual leaders are praying for them.

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<sup>8</sup> Beeke, *Getting Back to the Race* 32.

<sup>9</sup> Beeke, *Getting Back to the Race* 33.

## **The Reasons for the Backsliding Condition**

Reasons for backsliding as presented by Neil Watts, but not limited to Prosperity and abundance, false religions and idolatry, sinful environment, persecution and tribulations, cares and burdens of life, love of the world and its pleasures, lack of firm foundation in the Word, loss of faith, gradual wandering away from God and towards the world and its attractions, willful rebellion against God and His church, smoking and drinking alcohol, changing of location, rapid and superficial church growth through public evangelism.<sup>10</sup>

There is a clear picture of a paradigm shift in the way people behave in churches as observed above; that means many church leaders from time-to-time demand honor like God. Members are giving adoration to church leaders, choirs, pastors, bishops, reverends, etc. There are comparisons and contrasts from time to time among members towards their ministers. This is a dangerous ground to lead people into backsliding from God.

Research done by Clinton P. Lewis on the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists focuses on church dropouts. He reveals that the high rate of church dropouts occurs among members under the age of thirty-five, out of the single taking the lead. The main contributing factors given were relational problems with members, and other categories were sexual sins, worldly pleasures, financial and material needs, loss of interest, conflict with church members, lack of support, and members'

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<sup>10</sup> Neil Watts, "Backsliding and Apostasy: A Localized Study in Suburban Newcastle," *Theses Non-Avondale*, 1981, [https://research.avondale.edu.au/theses\\_non\\_Avondale/59](https://research.avondale.edu.au/theses_non_Avondale/59), 24-26, 58-59. Accessed 9 October 2023.

criticism among others.<sup>11</sup> The research gave measures to be taken to reduce the dropout rate but didn't show the implementation and the outcomes.

David A. Roozen affirms that the most frequently cited reasons for leaving the church have to do with intra-church discord (i.e., perceived shortcomings or criticisms of the church, usually involving some feeling that the dropout was not accepted, not loved, or wanted by other members of his or her church).<sup>12</sup> These reasons are somehow different from those of previous writers. He agrees with Lewis on criticism among church members.

An online article by Peter Edward Burch on 'Acknowledged and Perceived Reasons for Non-Attendance' gives another perspective on the reasons for non-attendance at Christian churches in America. Interviews were carried out on various Christian congregations and the reasons found are parental neglect, lack of religious training, family disorganization (conflicts), mixed marriages, personality of priests, traumatic experiences, and drifting from faith.<sup>13</sup>

The reasons given by Burch on backsliding can further be divided into four categories (1) Church-related reasons which include – the church being too restrictive on her rules about morality, changes in mass, confessions, terrified by the priest while being children, the priest's aloofness, lack of cordiality, insensitivity and tyrannical methods. The church failed to lead the way in breaking down barriers; socio-

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<sup>11</sup> Clinton P. Lewis, "Falling from the Faith: Causes of Membership Dropout in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists," *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 395 (1997): 76, 78. Assessed 20 September 2023.

<sup>12</sup> David A. Roozen, "Church Dropouts: Changing Patterns of Disengagement and Re-Entry," *Review of Religious Research* 21, no. 4 (1980): 427–50, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3510682>. Accessed 9 October 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Edward Burch, "Acknowledged and Perceived Reasons for Non-Attendance at Christian Churches in the Pacifica Community, a Suburb of San Francisco, California" (2007), 22. Dissertations. 253. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/253>. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dissertations/253/>. Accessed 28 February 2024.

economic, racial, national, and ethnic. Some people said that the church's worship services and sermons were boring; other people still became dissatisfied with the community rather than with the religious identification. (2) Theological reasons are – that some beliefs were different from those found in most churches; some felt that they were sinners, and the church was meant for saints. (3) Personal reasons are – their lifestyles were not compatible with the church; interested and excited in making money than being with people; children are grown up, there is no need to go to church; some felt that they are grown up and now can make their own decisions without pressure; the demise of a family member that made a childlike faith to be shattered. (4) External reasons involve – Lack of time due to work; the church program not being able to fit into one's schedule and lastly, some gave reasons for sickness or poor health.<sup>14</sup>

Paulraj Masillamony closely follows the same format as Burch but gives reasons which are somehow different from those of Burch. He focuses on the reasons for becoming inactive and eventually backsliding from the church as described below (1) Sociological issues – Unresolved family, interpersonal, and church conflicts; the demise of a family member or spouse; an economic crisis which hinders participation in tithing and other benevolent giving; members seek government jobs, that forces them to forego regular worship attendance. (2) Church-oriented issues – church becoming insensitive to people's felt needs, and due to lack of church support a member becomes inactive and backslid from the church; lack of the spirit of warm fellowship and concern for all members; poor worship services and programs, lack of warmth; lack of active involvement in leadership and church activities, not being

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<sup>14</sup> Burch, 23-27.

mobilized to give tithes and offerings; lack of mobilization and training for ministry.

(3) Personal Spiritual Issues – Hurried premature baptisms and lack of prior teaching and Bible study; not given time to be born again and make a personal decision without emotional feelings; lack of spiritual nurture on the newly baptized members.<sup>15</sup>

Even though the reasons given by Burch and the ones for Masillamony tend to somehow differ, there are some of course which have the same ideas. Indeed, many of the reasons given for members backsliding from regular church attendance fall into four categories: church, theological, personal, and sociological or external reasons. Some members as described above, leave the Adventist church because there is a lack of charisma in worship compared to those churches like Pentecostals, evangelicals, and many charismatic churches. Others leave because, while they were children they were forced and sometimes beaten for not going to church. Since now they are grown-ups, going to church is optional. They can make personal decisions to go or not to go, and nothing happens. Some still, and on the extreme feel that the church is for women and children.

Mark S. Jones' reasons for becoming active in a church are not always related to the reasons for becoming inactive. Ministry to inactive members as explained by Jones must begin with first discovering their needs. Conversely, trying to get inactive members active again without addressing their felt needs is a waste of time – yours and theirs. It just won't work. The reasons for members becoming inactive need to be unveiled first. It does little good to treat the symptoms until you know the reasons or

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<sup>15</sup> Paulraj Masillamony, "Training Laity to Minister to Inactive Members in the North Tamil Conference" (2000), 45-54. Professional Dissertations DMin. 507. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/507>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/507>. Accessed 28 February 2024.

causes. It is clearly stated here that members become inactive due to the felt needs.<sup>16</sup> To understand the reasons for inactivity, one must explore and diagnose the felt needs of the inactive person to prescribe the proper spiritual medication.

Louis C. Nielsen dwells on another term, ‘disassociation,’ which is different from other previous writers. He carried out a study on ‘Disassociation: An Investigation into the Contributing Factors of Backsliding and Separation from the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Michigan.’ He gives the following factors for disassociation from the church: failure to find a satisfactory spiritual-growth experience, lack of interaction and friends, lost interest, discriminated against, ignored, humiliated, unloved, rejected, disliked and degraded socially among others.<sup>17</sup> Nielson agrees with Roozen on some related reasons which include and not limited to not accepted, rejected, disliked, not loved, or unloved. The reasons given here cut across genders and age groups. He has not specified which gender is of higher percentage than the other. On the other hand, he has not developed any model or strategy to arrest the situation of disassociation.

Once people have been brought through the front door by outreach activities, it is assumed that their needs are satisfied and little attention is given to them. They begin to get spiritually cold as alluded to by Rodolfo N. Salazar, stop coming to church, and no one goes to visit them and invite them back. Thus, they have quietly left through the back door, unobserved and unattended, because the active members are posted at the front door to welcome newcomers. Some of the reasons why

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<sup>16</sup> Mark S. Jones, *Reclaiming Inactive Church Members* (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman Press, 1988), 15, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Louis C. Nielsen, “Disassociation: An Investigation into the Contributing Factors of Backsliding and Separation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan,” *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 56 (1977), 4. <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/hrsa/56>. Assessed 20 September 2023.

members stop coming to church are people simply getting too busy, family/home responsibilities or problems, lack of accountability at the back door, members moving too far from church, or their work situation preventing them from attending church. Lastly, many times, those who stopped coming to church feel that nobody cares if they attend church or not, since they were not visited and told they are missed.<sup>18</sup>

Salazar further gives elaborate information about who should be involved in visiting those who have stopped coming to church. Since time immemorial, it was traditionally known that the work of visitation was the responsibility of the church pastor visiting his congregants. The writer now says that visitation is a major task of the church; therefore, the church is obligated to give direction and supervision to the work. Everybody should serve as a minister and servant as well. This duty should be carried out by elders, deacons, deaconesses, and all church members as well to visit and reach out to the inactive church dropouts.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, nobody should be left aside in the task of visitation and ministering to church backsliders. All members should be involved.

The SDA Church Manual explains that one of the main duties of the Deaconate is doing visitations to church members. When those with special needs are not able to attend services, they should be visited in their homes.<sup>20</sup> Visitations to the homes of church members have proven to be one the most crucial tools to reclaim the backsliders, retain them, and keep the fire burning for all church members too. The

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<sup>18</sup> Rodolfo N. Salazar, "A Lay Visitation Program to Help Reclaim Inactive Members at the Hillsboro Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Hillsboro, Oregon," *Andrews University Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 114 (2011): 59. Accessed 14 September 2023. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin>.

<sup>19</sup> Salazar, 51-57.

<sup>20</sup> Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 20th ed. (Silver Spring, Maryland: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2022), 84, 86. <https://www.adventist.org>. Accessed 16 November 2023.

church might not lose any members when visitations are done frequently. It will create a sense of belonging and accountability for all members and they will remain intact to one another. On the other hand, it will make church members have a spirit of responsibility and caring for each other.

Regular financial contributions as observed was taken as one of the contributing factors for backsliding. Ahorator disagrees with this common analogy by saying that for church organisations to achieve their goals of expanding the Kingdom of God and preserving God's sheep through prayer, word ministration and welfare promotion, they need not only put their financial resources to good use but also grow these resources over time. Thus, in the presence of ever-increasing demand for resources to execute projects as churches grow into mega-churches, it becomes imperative that churches adopt sound financial management practices in order to boost their revenue generation and control their expenditures. He further says that qualified people should be placed to handle church finances, prioritize the goals and monitor the expenditure.<sup>21</sup>

Nothing so far has been mentioned about a particular gender. What the author has in mind is the priesthood of all believers, irrespective of gender, race, color, and language. The church cannot survive without a well-arranged visitation program.

### **Consequences of Backsliding**

Consequences are outcomes or dangers of one's spoken words and actions. The common Biblical quote, "You reap what you sow" (Gal 6:7), speaks volumes

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<sup>21</sup> Christian Regobeth Kofi Ahorator and G. S. Solutons. "Financial management issues in church organizations." *Glisten Strategic Solutions* (2009): 1-10. Accessed 5 May 2025. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christian-Regobeth-Kofi-Ahorator/publication/208939949\\_Financial\\_Management\\_Issues\\_in\\_Church\\_Organisations/links/009deb7d696ad26261b57b73/Financial-Management-Issues-in-Church-Organisations.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christian-Regobeth-Kofi-Ahorator/publication/208939949_Financial_Management_Issues_in_Church_Organisations/links/009deb7d696ad26261b57b73/Financial-Management-Issues-in-Church-Organisations.pdf)

about our day-to-day life. Whatever one speaks or does is likened to the planted seeds, the seeds will germinate and in the long run produce crops according to their kind, which is equally the result of one's actions. When you plant good seeds, you reap good and healthy crops; on the contrary, when you plant bad seeds, you will reap rotten crops. Just bear in mind that in the world there is always cause and effect in whatever happens; the 'why' and 'what' happens; the 'action' and 'reaction' of a matter. Backsliding must have awful consequences for the individual who has backslidden.

The consequences of backsliding include but are not limited to separating one from God, leading one to a lifestyle of sin, leading into apostasy, making a person dangerous to others, and making people stop returning Tithes and Offerings.

Chapter two gives several examples of those who backslid, separating themselves from God's ordinances, statutes, precepts, commandments, and testimonies. The first one to open the floodgates for backsliding is Adam, he separated himself from the presence of God and eventually was banished from the Garden of Eden for disobeying the voice of God the Creator. When you separate yourself from God, you switch off to anything godly and go a wayward way. If you do not confess and repent from your evil path, you will consequently perish eternally.

When one is struggling with sin, he should turn away and resist it, run to Christ for deliverance. Once you are delivered and have been set free from the wickedness of the past ways; it's time to start living a new life in Christ. Backsliding is something that has to be avoided at all costs because it can lead to a person losing salvation.<sup>22</sup> The consequences of not resisting sin, it gives birth to an addictive habit

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<sup>22</sup> Bibleversesnow.com, "Dangers of backsliding in the bible," accessed 26 February 2024, <https://www.bibleversesnow.com/dangers-of-backsliding-in-the-bible/>.

that will become difficult to leave and ends up destroying one's life forever. Sin is not a game to be entertained or played with, it is an evil to do away with.

Apostasy, as Tenney defines it, is the abandonment of one's religion. Israel's history was one of continual apostasy, as the people deliberately turned away from the God who had redeemed them out of Egypt and followed false gods and sinful ways. Consequently, God judged them and sent them into exile, although he never finally gave them up as a people and left the way of repentance open to the nation.<sup>23</sup>

The path to apostasy is where you are no longer responsive to the Spirit's call and completely no longer care about the things of God. One refuses to follow, obey, or recognize a religious faith. And in this case, the Christian faith which you now mock, when you reach this stage where you might reach a point of no return, which is why Hebrew 3:12 warns every believer in Christ Jesus not to have a sinful unbelieving heart that causes one to turn away from the Lord.<sup>24</sup>

When you are backslidden, you are one of the most dangerous people on earth – a walking bomb that can explode with time. The backslider's storm, like Jonah, can affect everybody – family, children, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even strangers. One man backslid from church and was taken into substance abuse, became addicted, so much so that he lost his job and went to the streets. He became dangerous to his family. All their money was cut off, and all of God's blessings disappeared. He tried to convince everyone, "It is my mistake, my problem. I'm only destroying my life." No – he was destroying his entire family! His three children became bitter and angry – mad at God, Daddy, Mommy, and the whole

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<sup>23</sup> Tenney, 253.

<sup>24</sup> Samuel, "10 Dangers of Backsliding [All Backsliders Needs to Know]," accessed 26 February 2024, <https://saintlyliving.com/dangers-of-backsliding/>.

world. And now the grandchildren, the godly legacy, this man could have had might never exist.<sup>25</sup>

The tithe belongs to the Lord, and He requests that we return it to Him.” Just as happened with the Israelite temple, our church would fall apart without the support of the member’s tithes and offerings. Our church services would not function without people who are paid to put time into quality ministry, planning, and management of the church for God. Worship of God would also be diminished in quality. Most importantly, though, without tithes and offerings, evangelism would be non-existent.<sup>26</sup>

### **Remedies to Overcoming the Backsliding Phenomenon**

Backsliding is a season of increasing sin and decreasing obedience in those who profess to be Christians.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, overcoming backsliding for believers is the condition of decreasing in sin and increasing in obedience. Overcoming is when one achieves, accomplishes, succeeds, and becomes victorious in dealing with a certain problem: sin, habit, disease, death, financial crisis, academic endeavors, family conflict, employment dilemma, etc.

In this context the researcher is dealing with backsliding among men and how it should be handled to get antidotes to arrest the situation. This is preceded against the backdrop that, there is inadequate literature specifically written on remedies of overcoming the backsliding among men. Whatever has been covered in the scholarly

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<sup>25</sup> World Challenge, “The Awful Consequences of Backsliding!” accessed 26 February 2024, <https://www.worldchallenge.org/awful-consequences-backsliding..>

<sup>26</sup> <https://ssnet.org/lessons/19d/less11.html/biblestudyguide-4thquarter2019>. Accessed 26 February 2024.

<sup>27</sup> Beeke, 16.

literature globally, continentally, and even locally has some bias to a certain area of interest.

Overcoming backsliding requires total renewal of heart and soul. There is a need for a change of attitudes, not new programs but new people. An experience of renewal must affect individuals as well as the corporate church; it must change perceptions of the individual as well as norms and practices of the congregations; it must foster love for God and love for one another; it is not a utilitarian experience but one directed to evangelism. The final product of the renewed congregation will not necessarily be a mystical experience but a new lifestyle which in turn makes the Christian faith appealing to others. As a result of this revitalization, people will be attracted to the church, producing an increase in accessions and a diminishing number of dropouts. Renewal is the secret of multi-dimensional growth.<sup>28</sup>

There is a need to uphold the Seventh-day Adventist doctrines throughout the Christian journey. The beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church have a strong biblical foundation and comprise the basic doctrines of the Church. These doctrines relate to belief in God, the nature of humanity, salvation, the church, Christian living, and the last things. That is why the more we understand these three main pillars of the SDA Church, the better we grasp what the SDA Church represents and how it endeavors to follow the teachings of Christ. SDAs strongly believe in God

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<sup>28</sup> Ruben Pereyra, "A Process of Self-Assessment and Goal Setting for a Latin American Local Congregation as a Possible Means to Create the Necessary Conditions for Church Renewal, Fruitful Evangelism, and Effective Nurture" (1980), 47-48. Professional Dissertations DMin. 567. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/567>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/567>. Accessed 26 February 2024.

the Creator, the Trinity (God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit), who is gracious, loving, and sustains the universe.<sup>29</sup>

The Christian journey is likened to a race which calls for understanding, resilience, consistency, humility, and perseverance to complete it. Sometimes a runner may be worn out, weary, careless, and weak. Christians must run strong in the Lord Jesus Christ to avoid giving up. They should not persist in backsliding; the race must continue to the very conclusive end. The remedies for overcoming the backsliding include small groups, Nurturing New Believers, Retention, Evangelism, Paul's One-on-one Fatherly Relational Remedy, Jesus' Discipleship Remedy, and The Jethro Remedy

### **Small Group Ministries**

Small group ministries as said by Miguel Angel Gonzalez play a vital role in the church's spiritual growth and development. The author continues to say that small group ministries is an essential mechanism of socialization and a primary source of social order. There is little doubt that a small group provides the major source of the values and attitudes people have, and an important source of pressures to conform to social values and attitudes. There is also little doubt that the roles that children learn within the family and the playgroup serve as the initial roles that they take into other situations. The small group serves an important mediating function between the individual and the larger society. From the standpoint of education, it is said that most effective human learning occurs when one learns in a social situation, when

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<sup>29</sup> Amiri, Sayed Mahbub Hasan. "Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs: A Theological Perspective," accessed 5 May 2025, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sayed-Mahbub-Hasan-Amiri-2/publication/390836012\\_Seventh-day\\_Adventist\\_Beliefs\\_A\\_Theological\\_Perspective/links/67ffd4cbded43315572a5298/Seventh-Day-Adventist-Beliefs-A-Theological-Perspective.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sayed-Mahbub-Hasan-Amiri-2/publication/390836012_Seventh-day_Adventist_Beliefs_A_Theological_Perspective/links/67ffd4cbded43315572a5298/Seventh-Day-Adventist-Beliefs-A-Theological-Perspective.pdf).

interpretations are checked with the interpretations of others, and when interactions facilitate growth.<sup>30</sup>

Some of the suggested areas under small group ministries to foster and nurture new converts include fellowship, Relationship, and Communication. God created human beings to have fellowship and become social beings, and that is why He said after creating Adam, “It is not good that man should be alone.” These words constitute a fundamental principle for man’s physical, mental, social, and moral growth. When someone is isolated from other human beings, he becomes bored, self-pity and miserable. It also brings into play the common saying, ‘No man is an island; every human being is a piece of the continent.’ When someone leaves the church, the common excuse he holds is, ‘I was abandoned and left alone by the church, and no one came for me, I felt I was unnecessary therein.’ The kind of spiritual environment a new believer experiences will play a large part in his subsequent Christian growth, or lack of it. The spiritual temperature of the church a new believer finds himself in will control to a certain extent the vitality of his life. A lukewarm, cold, or uncaring church environment can be devastating to a new Christian’s growth.<sup>31</sup>

Small group ministries work well when there is a mutual relationship with one another. Living things as well as human beings as echoed by Gonzalez survive collectively. Fellowship and relationship go hand in hand; one cannot exist without another.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Miguel Angel Gonzalez, “Group Ministry for New Converts in Puerto Rico” (1990), 85-86. Professional Dissertations DMin. 173. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/173/>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/173>. Accessed 26 February 2024.

<sup>31</sup> Gonzalez, “Group Ministry for New Converts, 87-88

<sup>32</sup> Gonzalez, “Group Ministry for New Converts, 91.

Finally, he indicates that communication is another distinct element of growth in small group ministries. This provides a platform for the new converts to speak their minds and ideas, which in turn will be responded to. Once his ideas are responded to, his dignity is enhanced. Sharing involves a willingness to disclose personal experiences, knowledge, and feelings. By personal sharing, the group moves from a physical group level to an emotional group level. It makes group members deeply interested in the welfare of others – there is now a combination of sharing and caring towards one another.<sup>33</sup>

### **Nurturing New Believers**

Paul was at the forefront of nurturing new believers in Christ, as affirmed by Lalmuansanga Chawngthu. Paul showed how he deeply cared for the new believers and their spiritual growth. He called them his children, for whom he labored in birth again until Christ was formed in them. They were gentle among them, just as a nursing mother cherishes her children. He affectionately imparted to them both the gospel of God and his own life, because they were dear to him. Spiritual babies, like other newborns, need gentleness and nourishment to grow spiritually and become strong in faith.<sup>34</sup> Nurturing is exclusively a fundamental component of spiritual growth for new believers. Nurturing involves, among other things: personal visitation, prayer, Bible study, follow-up programs, fellowship, sharing of our possessions, community service, and witnessing.

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<sup>33</sup> Gonzalez, “Group Ministry for New Converts, 94, 95.

<sup>34</sup> Lalmuansanga Chawngthu, “A Model for Enhanced Nurture of New Believers in the Reang Tribe in India” (2011), 27. Professional Dissertations DMin. 542. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/542>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/542>. Accessed 27 February 2024.

## **Retention**

One of the most important methods Jesus used in His ministry as implied by Yoseph Nyambega Otieno was teaching to retain His disciples and followers. He constantly taught His disciples the values of holy living. His lessons covered all aspects of human life and the mission His disciples were to fulfill. He steadfastly taught them the Word of God. Upon realization that they had not understood the day's lessons, He could patiently explain to them at home the meaning of what he taught during the day. He could even pause a question to them, "Have you understood all these things?" He wanted His disciples to know that whatever He taught them was important. He taught them in the Synagogues, in the cities, in villages, beside the lake, at the well, and even in private homes. He never entertained other people's opinions. He taught them the ways God correctly and refuted erroneous teachings.<sup>35</sup>

Teaching Bible study is the central key to the spiritual growth and retention of the new members and the church at large as indicated above. The church which is not grounded on the Word of God, can easily fall into false teachings from false teachers and its members will not be retained. People should be taught God's word from time to time, both our families and the church family are the pillars for spiritual growth and development. People should be thoroughly taught during and after class baptisms. There should be comprehensive teachings for children, youths, and adults. That is why Sabbath afternoon is set aside for Bible studies for all classes of people. Lack of spiritual food is likened to lack of physical food, which could eventually lead to malnourishment, starvation, and sudden deaths for many children, and adults as well.

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<sup>35</sup> Yoseph Nyambega Otieno, "New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church" (2014), 43. Professional Dissertations DMin. 255. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/255/>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/255>. Accessed 27 February 2024.

## **Visitation**

Throughout Paul's epistles, there are indications and a strong desire to visit each of the churches he had established. Chawngthu upholds that Paul did not merely journey back and forth between the churches he established; in some instances, he sent his co-workers, like Timothy, Erastus, Aristarchus, Gaius, Titus, and Tychicus to check on the progress of the churches and set things in order. On the other hand, Paul learned many lessons from the fellowships he had with the disciples in Damascus and made it a policy to stay and work with new disciples. He understood the importance of personal follow-up to meet the new believers' spiritual needs.<sup>36</sup> As indicated in the Deacons and Deaconesses Handbook, visitation is key and Christians should visit one another as Jesus visited the sick, bereaved homes, the needy homes, the pharisees homes and the tax collectors homes. Part of the job description of a deacon is to visit the sick, the bereaved and attend to the needy cases.<sup>37</sup> When new members are visited by fellow church members from time to time, they are ignited for Christ and will keep attending weekly church programs without fail. When a member fails to come to church once, twice even thrice and he is not visited, he feels deserted and neglected. He sees the church as an uncaring church and doesn't need to go back for fellowship.

## **Evangelism**

David W. Hinds explains that evangelism is significant to any conversation on church growth and health. It is one of the foundational principles on which everything else rests. Church growth will not be realized without a corporate concern for the

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<sup>36</sup> Chawngthu, 27, 28.

<sup>37</sup> Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, (Silver Spring, Maryland: Review & Ministerial Association, 2025), 68, 107-120 <https://www.ministerialassociation.com>. <https://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com> › ministries. Accessed 4 May 2025.

proclamation of the gospel to the world. The prominence in Acts is on the influence of the church in ever-widening circles until the whole world feels the impact (Acts 1:8). Churches would grow significantly when prevalence is given to efficient evangelism. The church, according to the Great Commission, is designed to win converts, teach them the way of the Lord, offer them a church home for spiritual and social fellowship, and, through the entire system, to prepare the people for heaven. No matter how good we are, we are still to proclaim Christ in us, the hope of glory. Members who are grounded in Christ make evangelism part of their lives.<sup>38</sup>

### **Bible Study**

Joseph asserts that few Christians today are anything but an echo. The repetition of profound Biblical truths discovered by Spurgeon, Moody, or Morgan has become the order of the day. These great past preachers contributed immensely to the spread of the Christian faith, and even today, their names are mentioned by pastors and Christian workers worldwide due to the truth they uncovered in God's word. Scripture is an account of knowledge that people should explore and discover for the betterment of Christianity. With this, it can be argued that the growing understanding of Scripture, and on the other hand, the scarcity of knowledge of God's word, significantly affect church growth. Many yearn to eloquently present Bible knowledge like these great men of yesteryears, but fail to discern God's richest blessings because they are unwilling to pay the price for discovering them. If Christians today are unwilling to pay the price for the truth, their spiritual growth could be greatly

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<sup>38</sup> David W. Hinds, "Retention of New Members into the Caffin Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church" (2001), 33, 34. Professional Dissertations DMin. 465. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/465/>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/465>. Accessed 27 February 2024.

hindered. If Christians fail to search for the truth, it could create an avenue for deceitful pastors and prophets to spread falsehood without resistance.<sup>39</sup>

## Prayer

Goldsworthy utters that prayer is biblical and lies at the heart of what many people refer to as spirituality. It speaks volumes as the term itself, belonging to everyone. Prayer is central to religion in any form. Prayer appears to be an instinct of all human beings, even when it is largely neglected or invoked only in the direst circumstances. Because prayer is a universal phenomenon, we Christians should strive to understand its essence and why it pervades all cultures and religions.<sup>40</sup>

Prayer could be considered the “core of faith” and is viewed by many as a helpful coping strategy, as clearly pointed out by Bade. People have reported that praying and having faith in God are the strategies they use most frequently to cope with personal problems. Prayer has been defined as “thoughts, attitudes, and actions designed to express or experience connection to the sacred” and more simply as people’s “vehicle for communication with God.” Increased knowledge of how prayer functions in the coping process can enable health care professionals to assist their patients or clients more effectively using this coping strategy.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Joseph Asiedu Mintah, "The Impact of Bible Studies on Church Growth: A Case Study of Grace Chapel Assembly of God Church." PhD diss., 2020. Accessed 6 May 2025. <http://localhost:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/841>.

<sup>40</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, "A biblical-theological perspective on prayer." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 4 (2006): 14-25. Accessed 6 May 2025. [https://cf.sbts.edu/equip/uploads/2021/10/SBJT\\_10.4.pdf#page=14](https://cf.sbts.edu/equip/uploads/2021/10/SBJT_10.4.pdf#page=14).

<sup>41</sup> Mary K. Bade, and Stephen W. Cook, "Functions of Christian prayer in the coping process." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 1 (2008): 123-133. Accessed 6 May 2025. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00396.x>.

## **Return of Tithes and Offerings**

Cortez asserts that tithing is a fundamental component of the relationship between God and humanity. By returning our tithes and offerings, we acknowledge that God is the Creator and Owner of everything, while we are stewards of His possessions. The tithing system goes back beyond the days of Moses. Men were mandated to offer gifts to God for religious purposes before the definitive system was given to Moses, dating back to the days of Adam.<sup>42</sup>

## **Sabbath School Program**

The Sabbath school program is a time designated for thorough Bible study through lesson discussion. Sabbath School Teachers need to demonstrate that they care about what they have to say both inside and outside of class. Welcoming, caring, and authentic Sabbath School classes are essential for retaining youth and young adults. Making young adults feel that they belong to the Sabbath School class can significantly impact their engagement and participation. Nobody wants to be part of a group of people who do not notice when they have been absent for three weeks in a row.<sup>43</sup>

## **Conflict Resolution**

Mekuriaw asserts that religious institutions and leaders still play a role in mediating a settlement between the opposing groups whenever the disagreement escalates into violent situations. They instruct their followers to live in harmony and

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<sup>42</sup> Felix H. Cortez, *God Will Provide: Tithes, Offerings, and Our Spiritual Life*, Andrews University, Inter-American Division Publishing Association: Florida (2021), 9. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1280&context=books>. [https://works.bepress.com/felix\\_cortez/317/](https://works.bepress.com/felix_cortez/317/).

<sup>43</sup> B. B. Beach, "The Objectives of the Sabbath School." *British Advent Messenger* 3 (1961). Accessed 7 May 2025. [https://www.andrews.edu/library/cat/cardigital/Periodicals/Messenger\\_British\\_Union/1961/1961\\_03](https://www.andrews.edu/library/cat/cardigital/Periodicals/Messenger_British_Union/1961/1961_03). Pdf.

love first, as well as to make amends with one another. If not, they believed that it was impossible to hold both the Kingdom of Heaven and peace with God.<sup>44</sup> Lee affirms that people should live in peace with each other through forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. He advocates that Christians should follow Jesus' three ways of solving the conflicts: rejection of politics of violence, first, love your enemy, do good, bless, and pray for those who hate and maltreat you; second, reconciliation rather than retaliation, and third, transforming initiative.<sup>45</sup> Conflicts as stated by Afolaranmi can be approached through: mediative dialogue, prayer, compromise, arbitration, counselling, consultation and persuasion.<sup>46</sup>

### **Paul's One-on-one Fatherly Relational Remedy**

Research done in the USA by Jacob Al Hassan concerning the high rate of youths dropping out from the churches adopted Apostle Paul's remedy of one-on-one fatherly relational concept to curb this worrying condition. Paul's relationship efforts impacted significantly the lives of young adults like Timothy, Titus, Luke, and Onesimus, to name but a few. Paul's influence on these young men was so impactful that his departure from active ministry following his arrest in Jerusalem did not affect

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<sup>44</sup> Mengist Tarekegn Mekuriaw, "The conflict resolution roles of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church." *International Social Science Journal* 75, no. 255 (2025): 179-191. Accessed 13 May 2025. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/issj.12544>.

<sup>45</sup> Young Woon Lee, "A conflict resolution approach to peace education in the local church." *Torch Trinity Journal* 15, no. 2 (2012): 141-166. Accessed 13 May 2025. [http://www.ttgst.ac.kr/upload/ttgst\\_resources13/20135-316.pdf](http://www.ttgst.ac.kr/upload/ttgst_resources13/20135-316.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> Adebayo Ola Afolaranmi, "Conflict Resolution and the Autonomy of the Local Baptist Church: A Critical Review." *International Journal of Religious and Cultural Practice* 7, no. 1 (2022): 11. Accessed 13 May 2025. [www.iiardjournals.org](http://www.iiardjournals.org). <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8057-137X>.

negatively the growth of the church.<sup>47</sup> This research has employed Pauline’s relational remedy, to address drop-out rates in our churches.

Al Hassan has further written on the absence of fathers from homes, quoting Obama’s Father’s Day speech in 2008 as follows, “Of all the rocks upon which we build our lives, we are reminded today that family is most important. And we are called to recognize and honor how critical every father is to that foundation. They are teachers, coaches, and role models. They are examples of success and the men who constantly push us toward it. But if we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that way too many fathers are missing from too many lives and too many homes. They have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men. And the foundations of our families are weaker because of it.”<sup>48</sup>

Paul adopted the young adults as a father and called them his spiritual sons. He was also a father to the churches he established. “Follow my example,” is the core message in the Pauline one-on-one fatherly relationship. Building a relationship with Christ was Paul’s idea of an effective personal relationship. Paul also said, “imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”.<sup>49</sup> A clear indication that his followers and spiritual children should emulate his example. In this research, the author has used mixed methodology in data collection, which is done from both Protestant and Catholic churches. The research lacks an implementation process to find out the extent to which the research benefitted the youths and at what percentage the dropouts improved.

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<sup>47</sup> Jacob Al Hassan, “The Pauline Concept of Discipleship as a Model for Addressing the Youth Dropout in the Twenty-First Century United States of America Church,” (*Southeastern University*, Spring 2020), 240.

<sup>48</sup> Hassan, 27-28.

<sup>49</sup> Al Hassan, 114-119.

The third remedy by Milton Daniel Marquez emphasizes A Discipleship Model for Youth at the Paradise Adventist Church. In the introduction part of his research, he stated that Adventist youths are getting lost in the church because they are not being disciplined effectively nor rooted in Scripture and lack a genuine relationship with Jesus. After comparing three models: Theoretical, Practical, and Youth, he came up with a model called, the “Power Up Model. Elements that inform the ‘Power Up Model’ comprise studying Scriptures, Community, and Focus on Ministry. The foundation of the discipleship journey is the reading, studying, explanation, and reflection on Scripture. The study of God’s Word will guide the discipleship process to discover the truth and spiritual growth.”<sup>50</sup>

The need for connection with others on the discipleship journey is important. The disciple must feel a connection with God and others within the community. A life focused on ministry gives purpose and meaning while helping the disciple connect with the church, where ministry and sharing of the gospel are organized and executed.<sup>51</sup> The second Pauline remedy and this are dealing with the youths but with different approaches. The second Pauline remedy has employed a fatherly approach as applied by the apostle Paul, and the second model applies the ‘Power up Model.’ The second model might not impact the youths, because it is more into the mature and experienced Christians.

The fourth remedy by Ezequiel Osorio focuses on “Go and Make Disciples” for the Hispanic Hoover Seventh-day Adventist Church in Alabama.’ The concern for his research is that many churches are adding new converts to their membership, but

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<sup>50</sup> Milton Daniel Marquez, “A Discipleship Model for Youth at The Paradise Adventist Church,” *Professional Dissertations DMin*, January 1, 2017, 50-56. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/348/>. Accessed 2 October 2023.

<sup>51</sup> Marquez, 50-56.

these new converts are not being trained and equipped to become true followers of Christ. His area of concern is Jesus' Discipleship Remedy.

The process Jesus followed had as explained by Osorio at least six stages: praying, choosing, inviting, training, empowering, and deploying.<sup>52</sup> Before Jesus could choose the disciples, he spent the whole night in prayer with God for divine intervention and direction, to get those who would be the base of His platform. He needs committed and spiritually transformed people to work with for the fulfillment of His mission on earth.<sup>53</sup>

Choosing has always been God's divine plan, Jesus never did anything foreign from God's divine plan and purpose. God chose Abraham, Jacob, and the children of Israel to proclaim His name among the heathen nations. The method of choosing the disciples was Jesus' initiative, and not vice versa. After choosing, Jesus invited the disciples to follow Him. He did not force nor threaten them. On the other hand, upon invitation, the disciples now had the freedom of choice, to choose to follow Him or reject the invitation.<sup>54</sup>

Jesus walked with His disciples for three and a half years. During this period Jesus took sufficient time for modeling, explaining, experimenting, and clarifying. The disciples had to learn new things and unlearn the old ones. Jesus knew that without empowering the disciples with the Holy Spirit, they would not accomplish much. So, He had to ascend to heaven to request the Father to endow them with the

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<sup>52</sup> Ezequiel Osorio, "A Discipleship Model 'Go and Make Disciples' for the Hispanic Hoover Seventh-day Adventist Church in Alabama," *Professional Dissertations DMin*, 2009, 57. Accessed on 2/10/2023. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/582>, <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/582>.

<sup>53</sup> Osorio, "A Discipleship Model 'Go and Make Disciples' for the Hispanic Hoover Seventh-day Adventist Church in Alabama," 57.

<sup>54</sup> Osorio, 58.

Holy Spirit. As soon as they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, they now had to embark on the ministry of proclaiming the everlasting gospel to the whole world, thus fulfilling the mission of the Great Commission.<sup>55</sup>

### **The Jethro Remedy**

Delegation of responsibilities. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, advised him to delegate some of his responsibilities to some able men; Moses obeyed and faithfully delegated his roles to them (Exod 18:21). The research has applied basic principles of the 5x5 model. What does this mean? The pastor of a church or district sets five zones within a church with five sub-zones in each zone. Each sub-zone has five cell groups with each cell group having seven to eight believers and a leader. Training is done within the cell for all members of the ministry. Upon training, one potential leader is identified as an intern. The intern completes the leadership training and is given opportunities to lead different parts of the cell. When there are five cell groups, a successful cell leader is promoted to become a sub-zone supervisor. The supervisors are trained disciples and mentors, to mentor cell group leaders. Each cell leader should mentor two to three members in his cell, out of which he will further choose one intern to take up a new cell group. It is the responsibility of every cell member to reach out to unbelievers for reproduction.<sup>56</sup>

The only difference between this method and Jethro's, this method shows delegating and multiplication of leaders while Jethro's shows only delegation of duties. When men are delegated with church responsibilities, they will be occupied spiritually, and backsliding conditions will become a foreign idea. This last model

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<sup>55</sup> Osorio, 58-69.

<sup>56</sup> Osorio, 78-83.

differs from the rest because it is more into leadership than discipling of church members. It emphasizes more on mentoring leaders in a cell group. Not unless men are made and trained to be leaders to engage them, the church will end up losing many of them. Pastoral observation indicates that when people are occupied with church leadership programs, they become active instead of passive and end up developing a state of not belonging; hence backslide.

### **Summary**

The chapter begins by explaining the concept of backsliding, which is taken as falling away from God and true worship. It shows Israel's turning away from Yahweh for pagan deities, they introduced pagan rites into Yahweh-worship; as if that was not enough, they also forgot and rejected the ordinances of the Lord (Jer 8:7). Not only the ordinary people, but even the religious leaders together were also guilty, refusing to respond to the prophetic entreaty. Then, the chapter explains the signs of backsliding, the reasons or root causes of backsliding, and the reasons for backsliding, which can be categorized into three main areas: church-oriented, personal, sociological, or external reasons. It further elaborates on the consequences of backsliding, and finally, the chapter ends by elaborating on the remedies to overcoming backsliding and the remedy is to increase in obedience and decrease in sin.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

The chapter describes the research design as follows: the type of research, rationale, appropriateness of the study, population, sample population, criteria for sampling procedures and selection, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

#### **Research Method**

This research employed a quantitative research approach. The quantitative research approach enabled the study to utilize a questionnaire with structured closed-ended questions of a four-point Likert scale of measurement to collect respondents' attitudes and opinions,<sup>1</sup> which included the backslidden male members in this study.

#### **Research Design**

The study opted for a descriptive survey design. A survey design provides a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population, or tests for associations among variables of a population, by studying a sample of that population. From sample results, the researcher generalized or drew an inference to the population.<sup>2</sup> Descriptive research design is used to accurately and systematically

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine A. Batterton and Kimberly N. Hale, "The Likert Scale: What It Is and How to Use It," *Military Operations Research Society* 50, no. 2 (June 2017): 32–39. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26296382>. Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Fifth edition (Los Angeles London New Delhi Singapore Washington DC Melbourne: SAGE, 2018), 149.

describe a population, situation, or phenomenon. It's ideal when the research goal is to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, and categories, particularly when little is known about the topic. This design helps answer "what," "when," "where," and "how" questions, but not "why" questions. In this study, the design enabled the researcher to identify and describe the trends among the backsliders in the process, also allowing them to answer the questions "what" and "why".

The research design provides the blueprint for the research.

### **Appropriateness of Study**

The study was appropriate because it focused on assessing the phenomenon of backsliding among men and the root causes of backsliding. The men used as a sample population were once church members but now are backslidden from church attendance and participation in church services. The same men who dropped out of the church were found in social gatherings and political rallies. Many get baptized, but unfortunately, they soon fall away from the church.

The reasons for their falling away and disassociating from church attendance and worship services were something to grapple with. Of course, they might blame church members for their unbecoming behaviors and leadership for not spiritually caring for them, but that could not be substantiated. That is the reason why research was carried out to understand the underlying factors for their backsliding state. This condition was shared with the Field administrators in 2022, and permission was granted to conduct the research. Meeting the backsliders at their level and context will also be appropriate.

## **The Study Population**

A population is the total set of individuals, objects, groups, or events in which the researcher is interested.<sup>3</sup> The sample size is a portion of the population used to make inferences about the total population under study.<sup>4</sup> The total population of backslidden men from the two districts (Mochenwa and Rigena) was 470.

## **Sampling Procedures and Sample Size**

Guided by the purpose, research questions, and various perspectives of the research design, the researcher purposively selected eight churches from the two districts mentioned, which translated to four churches from each district. After identifying the study population, a sample was required to represent that population accurately.<sup>5</sup> Respondents were purposively selected from the two districts with the assistance of church elders, deacons, church clerks, and departmental leaders who identified the backslidden men from their churches. This study specifically focused on the backslidden men from the selected congregations. In this case, the researcher targeted a sample size of two hundred backslidden men from the two pastoral districts (Mochenwa and Rigena) over the last ten years, but only 179 respondents were obtained.

## **Sampling Criteria**

The following factors were considered when choosing the sample: (1) the church with more than twenty backslidden men, as shown in the tables below, (2)

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<sup>3</sup> Petr Činčala ed. and David Penno, Pavel Zubkov and Safary Wa-Mbaleka, *Quantitative Research for Practical Theology* (Berrien Springs, MI and Australia: Department of World Mission, Andrews University and Avondale Press, 2023), 219-221.

<sup>4</sup> Creswell 2018, 150.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Harkiolakis, *Quantitative Research Methods: From Theory to Publication* (New York, 2017), 45-46, 48.

available members who were willing to participate within a certain age range, (3) not more than ten years out of the church, (4) those who could read, write, and understand English. See Table 1 below.

*Table 1. Selected Churches*

No	Church	Members	Youths	Women	Women Backsliders	Men	Men Backsliders
1.	Karantini	575	65	309	49	201	61
2.	Mochenwa	570	150	252	43	168	55
3.	Nyabogoye	318	112	128	27	78	40
4.	Embaro	309	55	169	24	85	35
5.	Geta	219	40	130	15	49	19
6.	Riabarare	89	16	48	12	25	15
7.	Huruma	77	15	36	10	26	13
8.	Sengera	291	91	125	28	75	47
9.	Eronge	240	68	101	25	71	43
10.	Nyagancha	215	72	86	23	57	35
11.	Nyakimegwa	191	64	75	21	52	28
12.	Moturumesi	159	42	74	18	43	23
13.	Rianyagoto	153	48	59	17	46	20
14.	Isamwera	151	42	65	14	44	16
15.	Gucha	144	47	57	8	40	11
16.	Omwobo	127	42	55	5	30	9
	TOTAL	3,828	969	1,769	339	1,090	470

### **Instrumentation**

In data collection, the researcher used a questionnaire as a research instrument for a survey. This was a self-constructed questionnaire on a four-point Likert scale of measurement. The questionnaire assessed: (A) level of agreement, (C) level of frequency, and (D) level of satisfaction.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Content validity of the questionnaire was concerned with the accuracy and correct measurement of the instrument. To test the content validity of the instrument,

it was subjected to scrutiny by presenting it to advisors and experts in the area of study, after which it was deemed valid. In order to achieve the purpose of the research, a self-constructed questionnaire was developed by the researcher for the collection of data. Validation deemed the questionnaire standard, clear, reliable and capable of collecting the required data. It had closed-ended questions which were precise to the point. A hard copy of the questionnaire was physically distributed to the respondents. It was easily administered, and was well manageable. Once data was collected through a questionnaire and analyzed, it showed accuracy; in other words, it measured what it was supposed to measure.

Reliability refers to the consistency or repeatability of an instrument. The most important form of reliability for multi-item instruments is the instrument's internal consistency, which is the degree to which sets of items on an instrument behave in the same way.<sup>6</sup> This means that if the researcher uses the same instrument, the same participants, and under the same conditions, the results will come out to be the same. Data from the self-constructed instrument was subjected to SPSS to ascertain its statistical reliability.

To test the reliability of the instrument, a reliability coefficient was run. A scale's internal consistency is quantified by a Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value that ranges between 0 and 1, with optimal values ranging between 0.7 and 0.9. A coefficient of 0.7 or higher is often considered indicative of acceptable reliability, particularly in fields such as social science research.<sup>7</sup>

It signifies that the items within a measure (like a questionnaire) tend to be consistent and reliably assess the same underlying construct.

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<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Harkiolakis, *Quantitative Research Methods: From Theory to Publication* (New York, 2017), 45-46, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Creswell 2018, 154.

Table 2 below shows the reliability coefficient that was obtained.

*Table 2. Reliability Statistics*

Key Area	Cronbach alpha	No of Items
Reasons for Backsliding	0.683	17
Personal Experience During Membership	0.822	19
Personal Practices and Involvement as a church member	0.746	15
Personal fulfillment from church experience	0.776	13
Total	0.757	64

From Table 2, the instrument was considered reliable, as the Cronbach alpha found was 0.757, indicating that the range is deemed good and acceptable.

### **Data Collection Process**

Just before data collection, the researcher acquired permission and an introductory letter from AUA Seminary, then clearance from the AUA Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (AUA-ISERC), and also sought authorization permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Further, letters were acquired from Nyamira County and Nyamira West Field respectively.

Data collection was conducted with the assistance of the first church elders and four additional individuals, who served as research assistants alongside the researcher. The two pastoral districts encompassed a total of sixteen churches; the researcher collected data from eight of these churches, with four from each district. This implies that the researcher had forty research assistants, with five from each selected church. The researcher scheduled appointments with the research assistants and arranged the days for data collection.

The researcher guided them through the instrument so they could understand it before gathering data from the respondents. Together with the researcher, they conducted house-to-house visitations to reach those backslidden men who were not attending church services. The assistants volunteered to help, and the researcher provided their transportation and lunch. The research focused on men who were once church members but are currently dropouts. The researcher supplied the questionnaires and informed consent forms, which were filled out and collected promptly. Once the data survey was concluded, the data was transferred to the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS) for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

After the collection of data, the researcher identified twenty-one missing data which were a result of being spoiled, double entry, and others returned blank. The raw data was analyzed electronically using the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS) software for descriptive data analysis which was presented in terms of frequency and percentages.<sup>8</sup> The results were then presented in form of pie-charts and interpreted thereof.<sup>9</sup>

This was achieved, by analyzing the research questions as follows: (1) the research cumulated and listed all reported root causes for men's backsliding through pie charts; (2) the researcher assembled and grouped the personal experiences of the respondents accordingly; (3) the researcher found the percentage of the backsliders personal practices and involvement in church activities and programs as church

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<sup>8</sup> Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 156.

<sup>9</sup> Creswell and Creswell, 156-158.

members before they backslid; (4) the researcher assessed the respondents' level satisfaction with church programs.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained from the AUA Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (AUA-ISERC), which served as the regulatory body for research at the University. In every discipline, it is unethical to collect information without the participants' knowledge, and their expressed willingness through informed consent is unethical. Protecting participants by allowing them to sign the informed consent form fosters trust and upholds research integrity. Participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the information they provided, which would be used solely for study purposes.

### **Description of the Micro Context Profile**

Culture and Lifestyle of the Kisii people:<sup>10</sup> Due to civilization, education, and economic power, the Abagusii people have experienced drastic cultural changes. This community was one of the few Kenyan tribes that practiced mandatory female circumcision. Although this ritual has since been outlawed, it persists but is not as frequent as it was in the past. Abagusii boys continue to be initiated into adulthood, and the Gusii as a group by circumcision. Families in the Abagusii society tend to be very large and socially cohesive, with families living close to each other and sharing daily activities such as cooking and farming. By custom, men are allowed to marry

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<sup>10</sup> Kisii is largely a term used to designate the people as well as the major town in the community. The people are generically called Abagusii. The singular is Omogusii. For convenience purposes, the term Abagusii will be used in this paper to indicate the people per se. Kisii will indicate place. Gusii will denote the land. Their language is called Ekegusii.

more than one wife and are considered to be the authority in their families, almost a “King” to their women.<sup>11</sup>

Circumcision of both males and females has been going on for decades, but in the recent past, churches and the government have been campaigning against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). During the initiation periods, these were mentoring periods that moved young boys into adulthood. Several life skills and cultural values were taught in the seclusion period that lasted between one to 3 months. In recent years, the period has been reduced to two to three weeks, and major instructions forfeited. Schools and churches are currently the major educational centers, assuming the places of initiations.<sup>12</sup>

Older people know many traditional songs, and their favorite instrument is a lyre (*obokano*). Most cultural rites and practices such as the naming of children, rites of passage, traditional marriage, dance, burial customs, and cultural institutions have been ignored with many adopting aspects of foreign cultures largely due to a lack of understanding and knowledge. This unfortunate scenario has resulted in a generation that shuns Ekegusii and Abagusii culture.<sup>13</sup>

## **Location and Climate**

Gusiiland is located in western Kenya, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) east of Lake Victoria. Abundant rainfall and very fertile soils have made Gusiiland one of the most productive agricultural areas in Kenya. Between 70 and 80 percent of the land

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<sup>11</sup> John Sorana Akama and Robert M. *Ethnography of the Gusii of Western Kenya: Avanished Cultural Heritage*. (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Ochoi Abai. *The History and Traditions of Abagusii People of Kenya: Mwanyagetinge* (Kisii, Kenya: Metro Graphics Inc., 2013). 133-135.

<sup>13</sup> Encyclopedia.com, “Gusii,” Accessed 11 April 2024, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/places/africa/kenyan-political-geography/gusii>.

can be cultivated. Since 1989, the Gusiis as a single ethnic group have occupied the Kisii and Nyamira counties of southwestern Kenya. The region is bounded by latitudes 0°30' and 1°00'S and longitudes 34°30' and 35°00'E. The area is a rolling, hilly landscape on plain reaching altitudes of 3,900 feet (1,190 meters) in the far northwestern corner of the territory, and 6,990 feet (2,130 meters) in the central highlands. In the nineteenth century, much of present-day Gusiiland was covered by moist upland forest. Today, all forest has been cleared, very little indigenous (native) plants remain, and no large mammals are found.<sup>14</sup> See the map below.

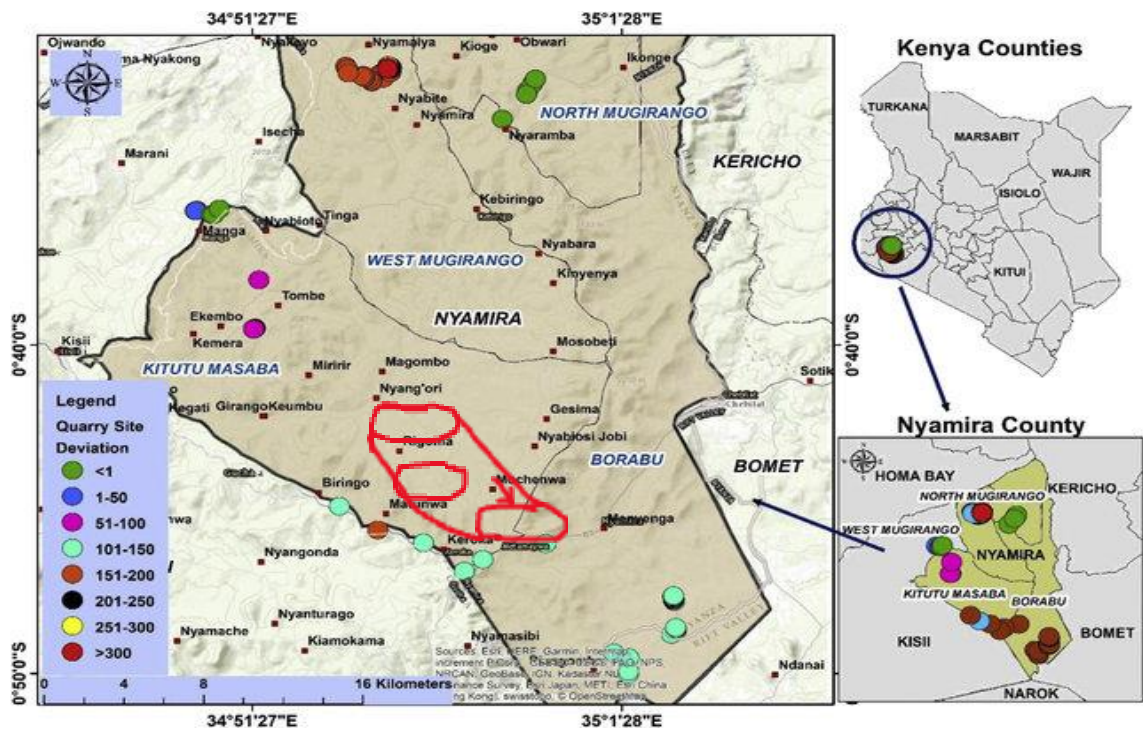


Figure 1. Map Showing Gusiiland

<sup>14</sup> Oyaro, C. D., and A. Osinde. "Assessment of Timelines against Trends on Environmental, Social and Economic Nexus in the Gusiis Region." *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies* 3, no. 8 (2019): 95-111. Accessed 5 May 2025. <https://kenyasocialscienceforum.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/pdf-chungo-and-osinde-assessment-of-timelines-against-trends-on-environmental-social-and-economic-nexus-in-the-gusii-region.pdf>.

The mean maximum temperatures range from 28.4°C (83°F) at the lowest altitudes to 22.8°C (73°F) at the highest elevations. The mean minimum temperatures are 16.4°C (61.5°F) and 9.8°C (50°F) respectively. Rain falls throughout the year with an annual average of 1,500 to 2,000 millimeters (60 to 80 inches). There are two peak seasons of rainfall: March to May is the major rainy season; and September to November is the minor rainy season.<sup>15</sup>

### **Language**

Ekegusii is a Western Bantu language. There is little literature available for teaching Ekegusii, except for some elementary works in the form of folktales, short stories, songs, and proverbs. To date, the Holy Bible and Christian hymnals remain the major translations and the only rich sources of written Ekegusii. Ekegusii is dependent on tone differentiation.<sup>16</sup> Even though Ekegusii is widely spoken in Gusiiland, some areas have differed so much in tone and sometimes may not be understood by others.

### **Education**

Education is in high demand, and there are more than 200 high schools in Gusiiland, the majority of which are community-supported. A majority of Gusii between 6 and 24 years old have attended school. By the 1980s, fewer than 50% of all Gusii children attended secondary school, but all attended primary schools. Female enrollment in secondary school is at 45%, while adult literacy is 56% (high in much of Kenya). The government has only scrapped the tuition fees for public secondary

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<sup>15</sup> Encyclopedia.com, "Gusii," Accessed 11 April 2024, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/places/africa/kenyan-political-geography/gusii>.

<sup>16</sup> Encyclopedia.com, "Gusii," Accessed 11 April 2024.

schools; for most children, primary school is the highest level of education open to them. Private schools have grown in number in the district. They often do better in the region.<sup>17</sup>

In the Mochenwa and Rigena areas, there are three secondary schools and six primary schools. One secondary and two primary schools are sponsored by the SDA church while the other secondary and primary schools are sponsored by the Catholic Church. There is one private primary school. More than 40% have completed at least secondary school and 10% have gone through college and university studies.

Economy: The major cash crops in Gusiiland include tea, coffee, pyrethrum, and banana as well as the high potential in horticulture. The main food crops include maize, beans, cassava, sweet potatoes, vegetables, millet, and sorghum. The precolonial staple crop was finger millet, which was grown together with sorghum, beans, and sweet potatoes. Cultivated plant food was complemented by meat and milk from livestock and wild vegetables. At the end of the nineteenth century, the cultivation period was two years, with a fallow of three to six years. By the 1920s, maize had overtaken finger millet as both a staple food crop and a cash crop. Other important contemporary crops include cassava, pigeon peas, green grams, onions, bananas, potatoes, and tomatoes.<sup>18</sup>

Coffee was already being grown on a limited basis in the 1930s, and, by the 1950s, Gusiiland had become established as a producer of coffee and tea. Iron hoes and ox-drawn plows are still used in cultivation. Livestock was formerly more numerous, but farmers still raise cattle (both local zebu and European stock), goats, sheep, and chickens. The high population density has forced Gusii to utilize every

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<sup>17</sup> Encyclopedia.com, "Gusii," Accessed 11 April 2024

<sup>18</sup> Encyclopedia.com, "Gusii," Accessed 11 April 2024

available space for agriculture, and most families today cannot produce enough food for their subsistence needs. In addition to farming, many in Gusii engage in employment or business, either locally or in the large urban centers.<sup>19</sup>

In the area where research is carried out, at least 80% of families have tea as a cash crop, less than 10% have coffee, and the rest are small-scale businesses.

Horticultural farming is the order of the day in the majority of homesteads. The main food crops in this area include maize, beans, bananas, finger millets, sorghum, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, tomatoes, and a variety of vegetables. Some rear cows, goats, sheep, and chickens.

### **Religious Beliefs**

The community is about 82% Christian and 18% traditional religion. Before the advent of Christianity in the region, the Gusii believed in the existence of one God (*Engoro*), who was the originator of the world but did not directly interfere in human affairs. It was the concept of an ancestor cult that, together with their ideas about witchcraft, sorcery, and impersonal forces, provided a complex of beliefs in suprahuman agencies. The ancestor spirits (*ebirecha*) existed both as a collective and as individual ancestors and ancestresses of the living members of a lineage. They were not propitiated until there was tangible evidence of their displeasure, such as disease or death of people and livestock or the destruction of crops. Some of Gusii people today claim to be adherents of a Christian church. There are four major denominations in Gusiiland: Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, Swedish Lutheran, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of God.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Encyclopedia.com, "Gusii," Accessed 11 April 2024

<sup>20</sup> Encyclopedia.com, "Gusii," Accessed 11 April 2024

Churches in Mochenwa include Seventh-day Adventist, Catholic, Pentecostal Assemblies of God, and other small mainline churches. The majority of the members around the Mochenwa area are SDAs surrounded by three SDA churches with a radius of 1kilometer. There is also a minority group, which don't go to any church. Although people go to church, there are some who still hold to traditional beliefs. Some visit sorcerers, magicians, diviners, soothsayers, and witchdoctors.

### **Population**

This field research work was carried out at Rigoma Ward and Gesima Ward in Masaba North Subcounty – Nyamira County. Gesima Ward is County Assembly No 1351 with a population of 35,672 and the Ward area in sq.km of approximately 54.80. It comprises of Nyatieno, Nyamakoroto and Karantini Sub-Locations.<sup>21</sup> There is not much literature that has been specifically written on this area other than Kisii (Gusii) land in general. Much of the information given below covers the entire Gusii land, which is more or less the same elsewhere. Whatever happens in one place (culture, climate, religious beliefs, language, economy) is repeated across Gusiiland in general.

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<sup>21</sup> John Smith, "Gesima County Assembly Ward," accessed 11 April 2022, <https://kenyacradle.com/gesima-county-assembly-ward/>.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the results, discusses the analyses, and provides interpretations as supported by the literature. Results from the quantitative data were tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted accordingly. The discussion provided answers to all the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The findings on the pie charts below foster a better understanding of the study.

#### **Demographics**

Demographic data on research participants is essential for evaluating whether individuals in a specific study form a representative sample of the target population for generalization purposes. In this study, demographics aided the researcher in identifying specific members of the sample based on key characteristics such as age, marital status, family background, religious background, educational background, and occupation. The pie charts below show a summary of the demographics of the respondents in percentage form.

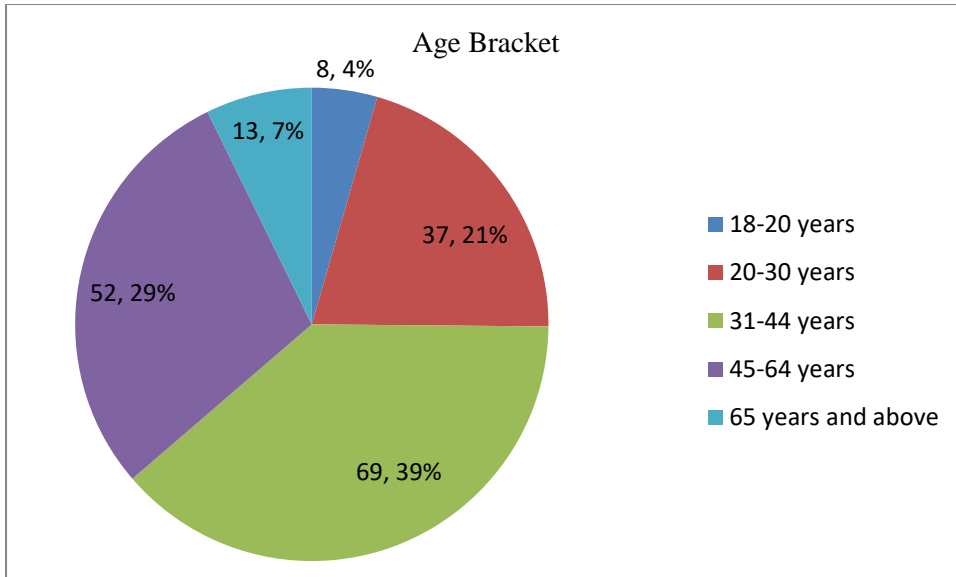


Figure 2. Age Bracket

As shown in Figure 2, the distribution of the participants' age brackets (n=179) indicated that 4% were between 18 and 20 years, 21% were between 20 and 30, 39% were between 31 and 44, 29% were between 45 and 64, and 7% were 65 years and above. This means that the majority of the respondents were between 31 and 44 years old.

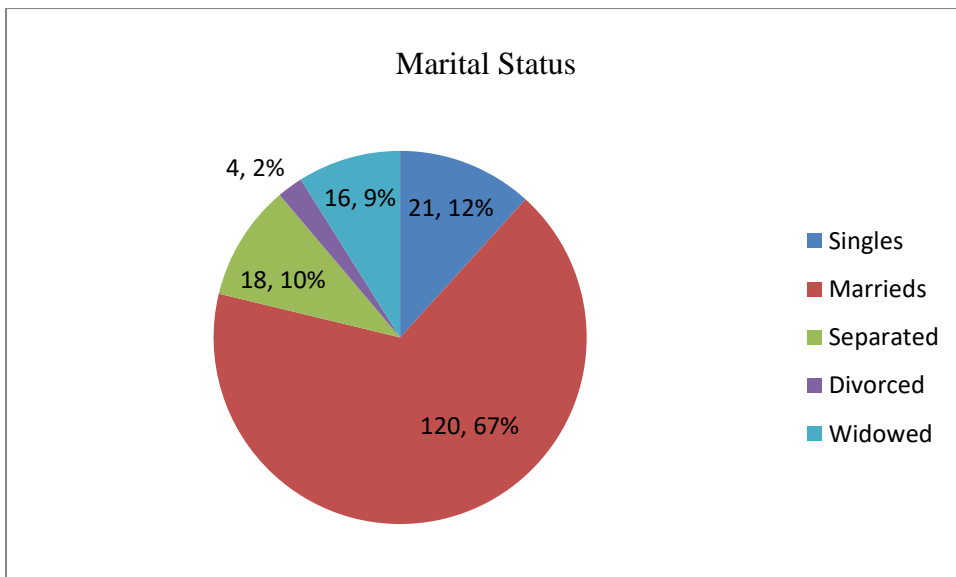


Figure 3. Marital Status

As shown in Figure 3, regarding the marital status of the participants (n=179), 12% indicated that they were single, 67% were married, 10% were separated, 2% were divorced, and 9% were widowed. This means that a majority of the respondents were married.

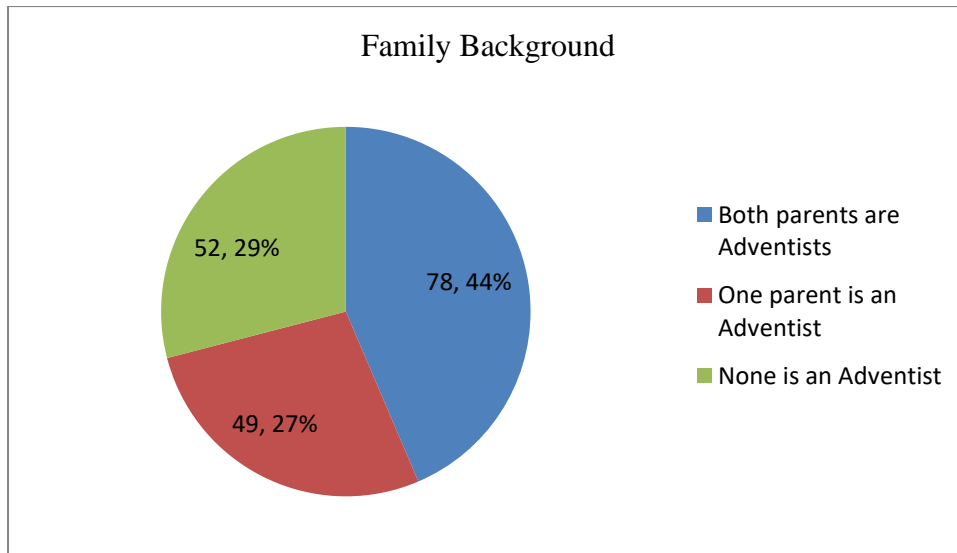


Figure 4. Family Background of Respondents

As shown in Figure 4, in terms of the family background of the participants (n=179), 44% have both parents being Adventists, 27% have one parent being an Adventist, and 29% have neither parent being an Adventist. This means that the majority of the respondents have both parents as Adventists.

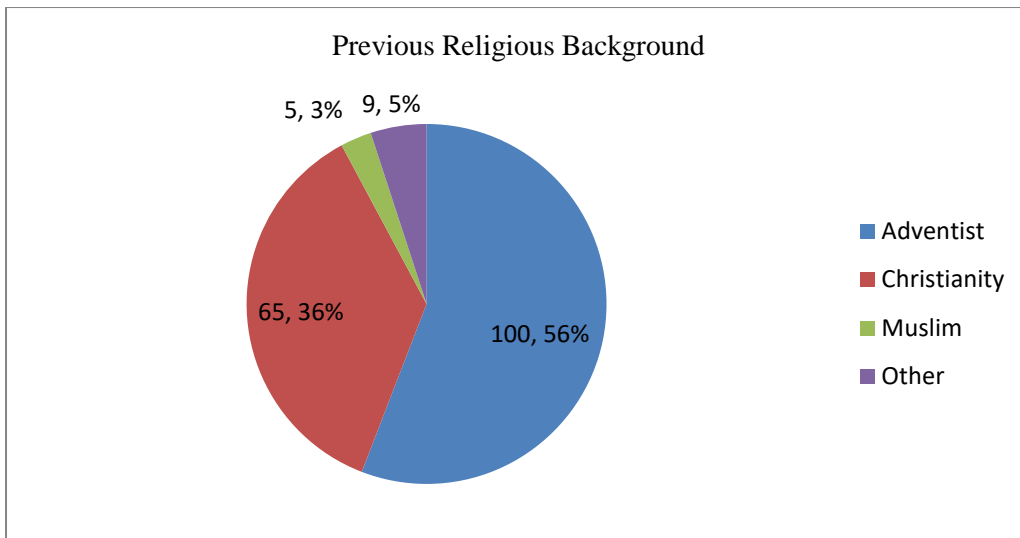


Figure 5 Previous Religious Backgrounds of the Respondents

As shown in Figure 5, regarding previous religious background (n=179), 56% indicated that they had been Adventists all through, 36% belonged to other Christian faiths before converting to Adventism, 3% were Muslims, and 5% were from other religions. This means that the majority of backsliders belonged to different Christian churches before converting to Adventism.

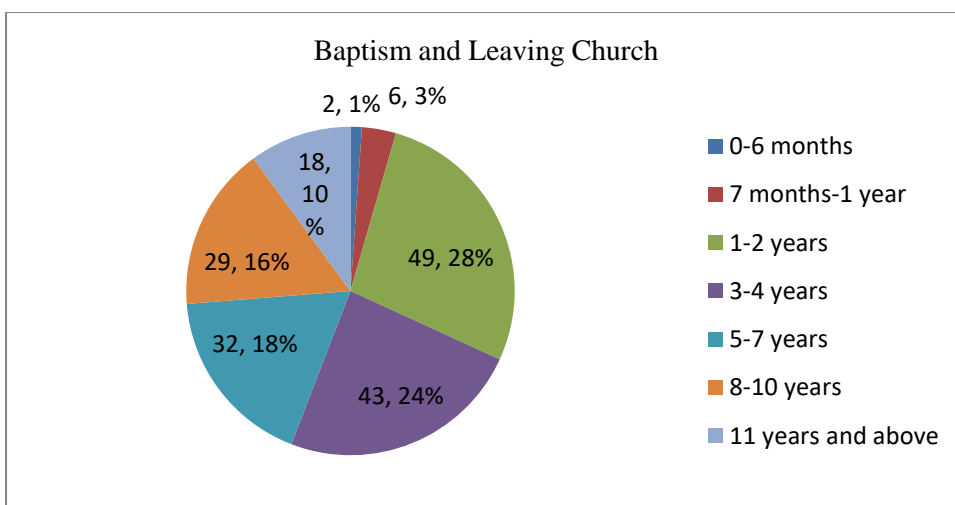


Figure 6. Period between the Respondent's Baptism and Leaving the Church

As shown in Figure 6, in terms of the period between baptism and leaving the Adventist church (n=179), 1% indicated that it took them only between 0-6 months to leave, 3% between 7 months and 1 year, 28% between 1-2 years old, 24% took 3-4 years, 18% took 5-7 years, 16% took 8-10 years, while 10% took 11 years and above to leave the church. This means that the majority of those who left the church took 1-2 years to leave.

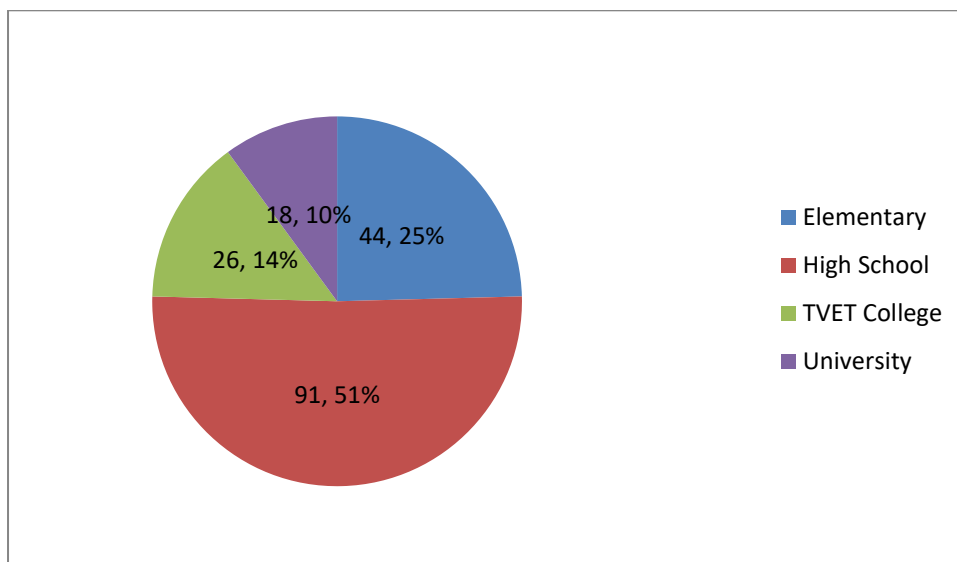


Figure 7. Education Background of the Respondents

As shown in Figure 8, the educational background of the respondents (n=179) is as follows: 25% had only elementary education, 51% reached high school level, 14% had TVET or college-level training, and 10% had university-level education. This means that the majority of the respondents had a high school level of education.

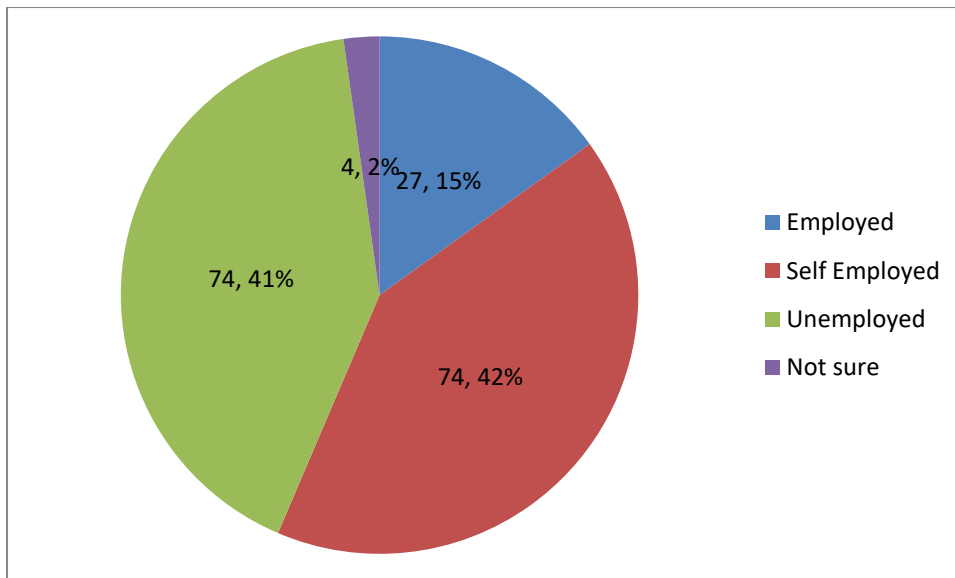


Figure 8. Occupation of the Backsliders

As shown in Figure 9, in terms of occupation of the respondents (n=179), 15% indicated that they were employed, 42% were self-employed, another 41% indicated that they were unemployed, and 2% indicated that they were not sure what their occupation was. This means that the majority of the respondents are either self-employed or unemployed.

In summary, most men backslide between the ages of 31 and 44, which implies that more middle-aged people backslide compared to other age brackets. Second, the majority of respondents were married, and they backslid for various reasons. Most of them were active before marriage, but unfortunately, shortly after marriage, many began to backslide, leaving only their wives and children attending church services. Third, the majority of the respondents have both parents as Adventists. Fourth, the majority of backsliders belonged to different Christian churches before converting to Adventism. Fifth, the majority of those who left the church took 1-2 years to leave. Sixth, the majority of respondents had a high school

level of education. Seventh, the majority of the respondents are either self-employed or unemployed.

### Research Question 1

What were the root causes of men's backsliding from church membership in selected congregants in Nyamira West Field, East Kenya Union Conference?

In order to answer research question one, the respondents were asked to state their opinions on the reasons for leaving the church. A list of possible reasons for leaving the church was provided to help analyze the data quantitatively using SPSS. The analysis was done and presented through pie charts and in terms of frequency and percentage, as summarized in the pie charts below.

Pie charts representation of the respondents' opinion on the root causes of men backsliding from church membership.

The first reason was a lack of financial support, which is summarized in Figure 10 below using a pie chart.

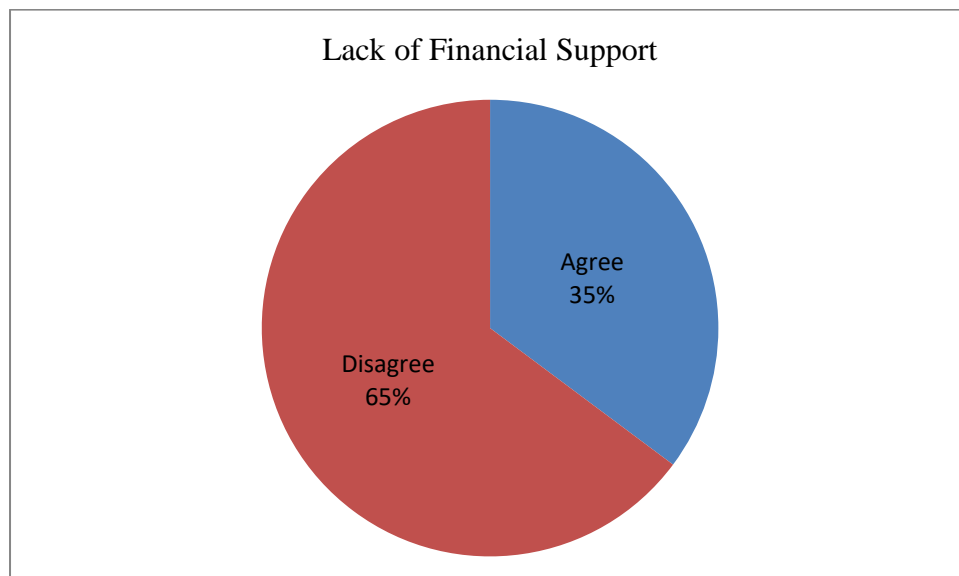


Figure 9. Members' Opinion on Lack of Financial Support as a Reason for Backsliding

Regarding whether financial support was the reason for leaving the church, 35% agreed, while 65% disagreed that lack of financial support was the reason for their leaving the church. This indicates that most respondents disagreed that they backslide due to a lack of financial support. Financial support refers to material assistance provided by a church to help individuals, families, or ministries fulfill various needs. This concept is grounded in biblical principles of stewardship, generosity, and mutual care within the body of Christ. It suggests that the church should be informed through Scriptural texts that even with limited resources, they can still cultivate a deep reliance on God during economic hardships.

The financial support in this study is not a significant reason for individuals to backslide from church attendance and membership. The results contradict research conducted by Lewis,<sup>1</sup> Masillamony,<sup>2</sup> and Jones,<sup>3</sup> who affirm that financial and material needs, along with a lack of church support and felt needs, are significant reasons for church dropouts.

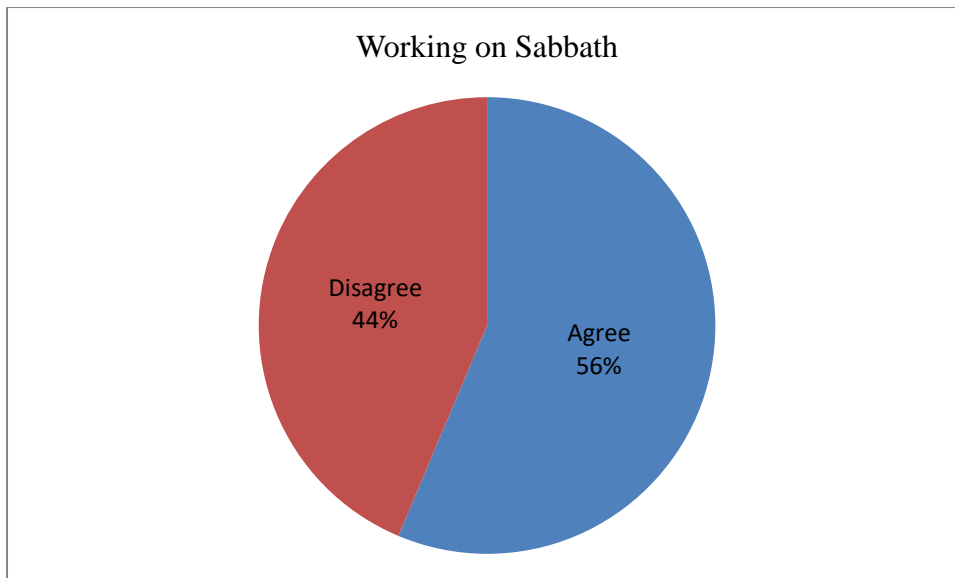
The second reason was working on the Sabbath, which is presented in Figure 11.

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<sup>1</sup> Clinton P. Lewis, "Falling from the Faith: Causes of Membership Dropout in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists," *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 395 (1997): 76, 78. Assessed 20 September 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Paulraj Masillamony, "Training Laity to Minister to Inactive Members in the North Tamil Conference" (2000), 45-54. Professional Dissertations DMin. 507. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/507>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/507>. Accessed 28 February 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Mark S. Jones, *Reclaiming Inactive Church Members* (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman Press, 1988), 15, 18.



*Figure 10.* Opinion on Working on Sabbath as a Cause of Backsliding

Regarding whether working on the Sabbath was the reason for leaving the church, 56% agreed, while 44% disagreed. The meaning of this is that the majority agreed that working on the Sabbath was a reason for backsliding.

The inference is that people are compelled to choose between economic survival and religious practice. This further implies a shift in personal priorities, which undermines religious commitment. Working on the Sabbath overrides Sabbath observance, leading to feelings of guilt, isolation, and disengagement from church activities. This implies that church leaders should offer pastoral support, teachings on Sabbath observance, job counseling, and spiritual nourishment. This is supported by Burch's<sup>4</sup> and Masillamony's<sup>5</sup> assertion that the lack of time due to work makes the

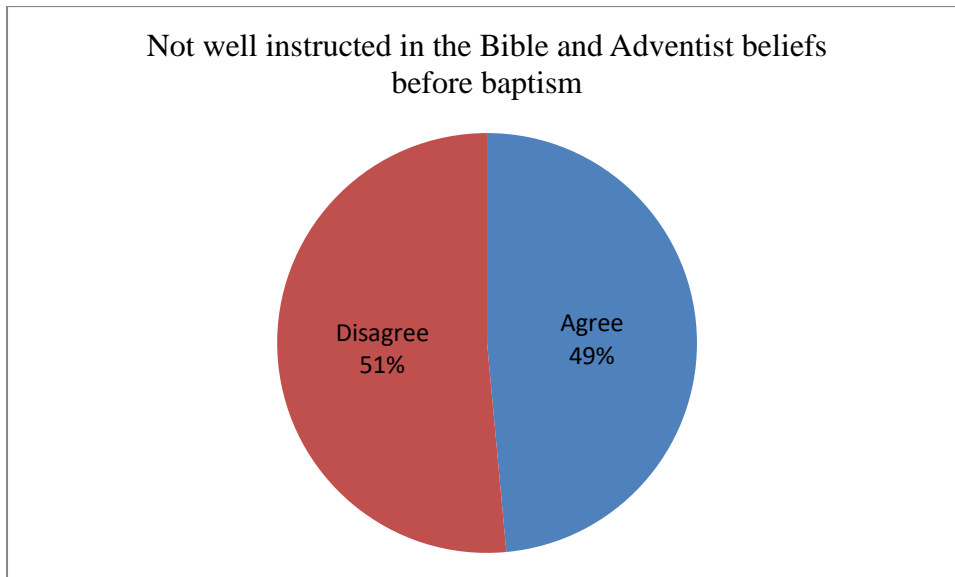
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<sup>4</sup> Peter Edward Burch, "Acknowledged and Perceived Reasons for Non-Attendance at Christian Churches in the Pacifica Community, a Suburb of San Francisco, California" (2007), 23-27. Dissertations. 253. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/253>. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dissertations/253/>. Accessed 28 February 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Paulraj Masillamony, "Training Laity to Minister to Inactive Members in the North Tamil Conference" (2000), 45-54. Professional Dissertations DMin. 507. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/507>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/507>. Accessed 28 February 2024.

church program unable to fit into one's schedule. Church members seek government jobs, forcing them to forego regular worship and church attendance.

The third reason for backsliding was not being well instructed in the Bible and Adventist beliefs before baptism. Figure 12 gives a pictorial representation of their opinions.



*Figure 11.* Opinions on Not Well Instructed in the Bible and Adventist Beliefs Before Baptism

Regarding whether not being well instructed in the Bible and Adventist beliefs before baptism was the reason for their leaving the church, 49% agreed, while 51% disagreed. The majority disagreed that not being well instructed in the Bible and Adventist beliefs before baptism was a reason for backsliding. When Christians are not well-instructed, it indicates that they will not have a solid biblical foundation, hence become spiritually vulnerable and unable to resist temptations and false teaching. Not being well instructed in the Bible and Adventist beliefs before baptism may also imply a lack of understanding of the fundamental principles of faith. When there is no biblical and doctrinal foundation, the commitment may be shallow, temporal rather than based on conviction, making one vulnerable to disillusionment

and easily swayed by difficult times. In view of this, it implies that church elders should undertake adequate preparation before baptism through proper systematic teachings on the Bible and Adventist beliefs, as well as ongoing instruction after baptism.

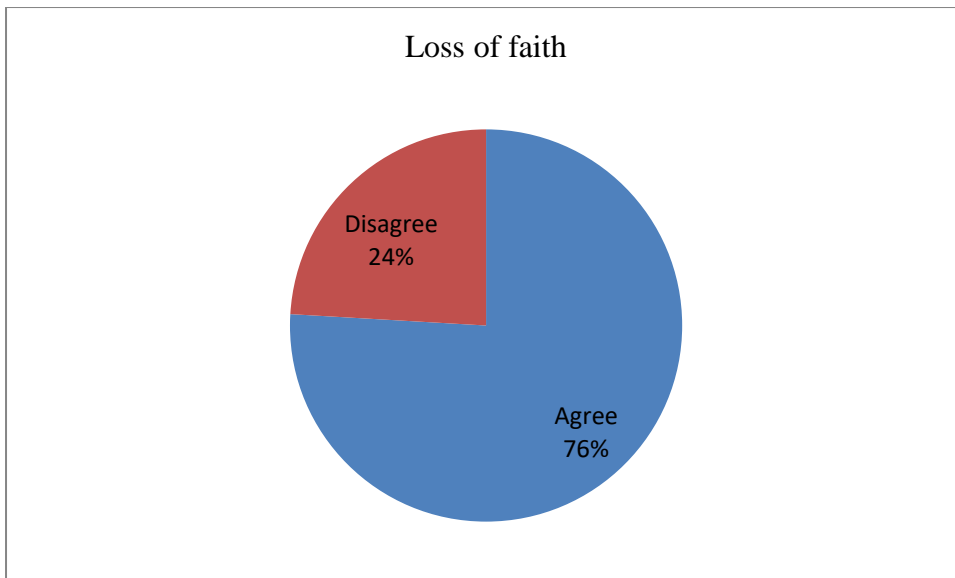
Kelsey<sup>6</sup> and Masillamony<sup>7</sup> see it differently; they believe that biblical knowledge is crucial for the development and maturity of Christian character. Hurried, premature baptisms and a lack of prior class baptism teaching and Bible study prevent individuals from having enough time to be born again and make personal decisions without emotional feelings. Pastoral observations align with Kelsey and Masillamony, indicating that a lack of pre-class baptism Bible study would lead to backsliding. There have been a series of evangelistic campaigns, camp meetings, and revivals, during which a call is made, resulting in individuals being baptized on the spot.

The fourth reason for backsliding was the loss of faith. Figure 13 shows their opinion in a pictorial representation.

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<sup>6</sup> David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The uses of Scripture in modern theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 93.

<sup>7</sup> Paulraj Masillamony, "Training Laity to Minister to Inactive Members in the North Tamil Conference" (2000), 45-54. Professional Dissertations DMin. 507. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/507>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/507>. Accessed 28 February 2024.



*Figure 12.* Opinion on Loss of Faith as a Reason for Backsliding

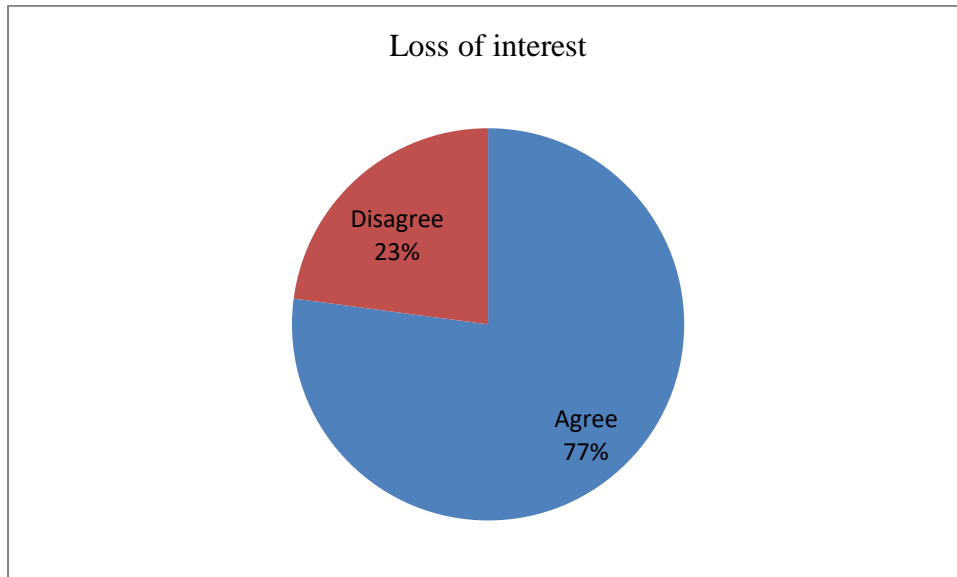
Regarding the reason for leaving the church, 76% of respondents agreed that loss of faith was the reason, while 24% disagreed. The majority agreed that loss of faith was a reason for dropping out of church membership.

This suggests that someone can lose faith due to doubts, challenges, skepticism, or a complete denial of their former beliefs. This leads to a strained relationship with God, making Bible study, prayer, weekly worship, and obedience to God’s commandments unnecessary. The implication here is that church pastors need to strategize ways for restoration, which leads to rebuilding faith through Bible study, prayer, and participation in church programs. While agreeing with the respondents, Barbour argues that losing faith brings emotive turbulence, resulting in painful feelings such as heartbreak, guilt, loneliness, and hopelessness.<sup>8</sup> All these factors could contribute to someone deciding to shy away from church, especially when not well handled by fellow parishioners and church leaders.

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<sup>8</sup> John D. Barbour, *Versions of Deconversion: Autobiography and the Loss of Faith*. Harlottesville: U of Virginia, 1994.

The fifth reason for backsliding was the loss of interest. Figure 14 shows their opinion in a pictorial representation.



*Figure 13.* Opinions on the Loss of Interest as a Reason for Backsliding

Regarding the response, loss of interest was the reason for their leaving the church; 77% agreed, while 23% disagreed. This means that the majority agreed that loss of interest was a reason for backsliding.

Loss of interest reveals a decline in one's spiritual life, detachment from God, and degeneration of one's spirituality. There is a regression in spiritual aspects, such as prayer, Bible study, and disengagement from regular worship. Other underlying reasons for the loss of interest may include a lack of follow-up, insensitivity from members and leaders, and negative peer pressure, among others. This implies a need for church leaders to rekindle their passion, renew their spiritual purpose, and reconnect backsliders with God and the church through the spiritual remedies

mentioned above. This study, therefore, aligns with Lewis<sup>9</sup> and Nielsen<sup>10</sup>, who assert that loss of interest is among the significant contributing factors that lead many Christians to backslide, with the most affected age category being those under thirty-five years old.

The sixth reason for backsliding was being involved in smoking. Figure 15 is a pictorial representation of their opinion.

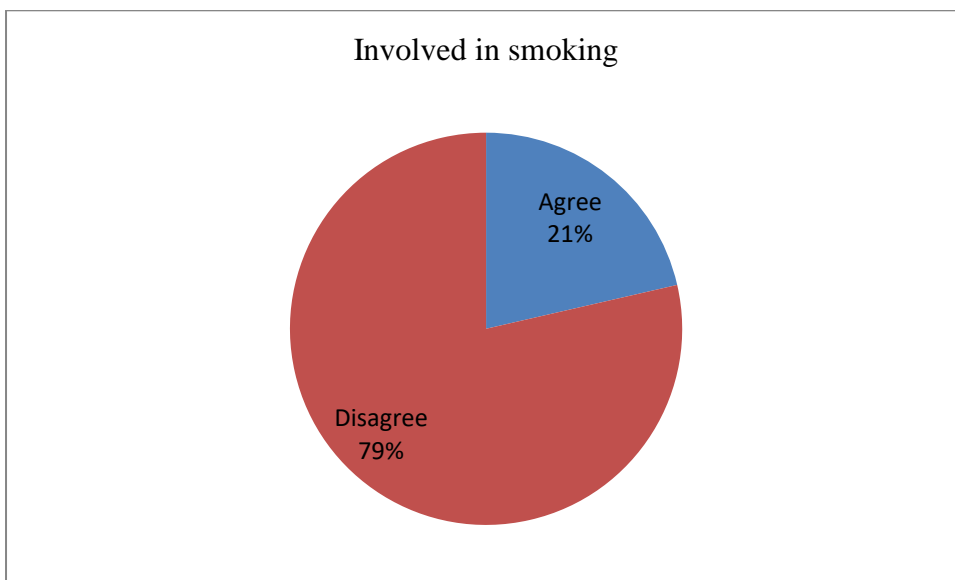


Figure 14. Opinions on Being Involved in Smoking as a Reason for Backsliding

On the response of being involved in smoking, 21% agreed, while 79% disagreed. The majority disagreed that being engaged in smoking was a reason for backsliding.

As much as smoking is considered a Christian vice, most backsliders do not view it as a reason for their backsliding. This suggests that engaging in smoking may reflect an unhealthy habit or addiction, which may not necessarily indicate a

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<sup>9</sup> Lewis, 76, 78.

<sup>10</sup> Nielsen, 4.

deliberate rejection of faith. This presents a behavioral issue, wherein someone may struggle with this habit yet still desire to follow Christ Jesus through prayer, Bible study, and spiritual growth. Indirectly, it may indicate that smokers continue to fellowship and backslide due to other influencing factors. The implication is that church leaders should focus on nurturing their faith and helping them achieve victory through prayer to God. One significant advantage the church needs to capitalize on is the presence of these smokers, as they could be gradually rehabilitated within the church community. Neil Watts disagrees with the aforementioned research, stating that smoking, among other factors, contributes to backsliding. According to him, the fear of being seen smoking prevents individuals from attending church and engaging with church members.<sup>11</sup>

The seventh reason for backsliding was being involved in drinking alcohol.

Figure 16 is a pictorial representation of their opinions.

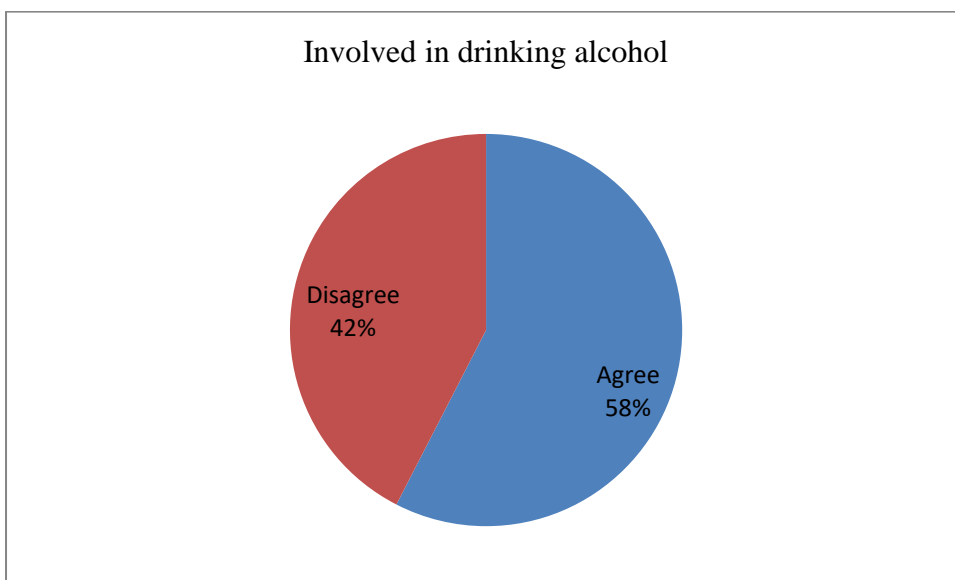


Figure 15. Opinions on Being Involved in drinking alcohol as a Reason for Backsliding

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<sup>11</sup> Watts, 58-59.

On the response of being involved in drinking alcohol as the reason for leaving the church, 58% agreed, while 42% disagreed. The majority agreed that being involved in drinking alcohol was the main reason for not attending weekly church services and eventually dropping out of the church membership.

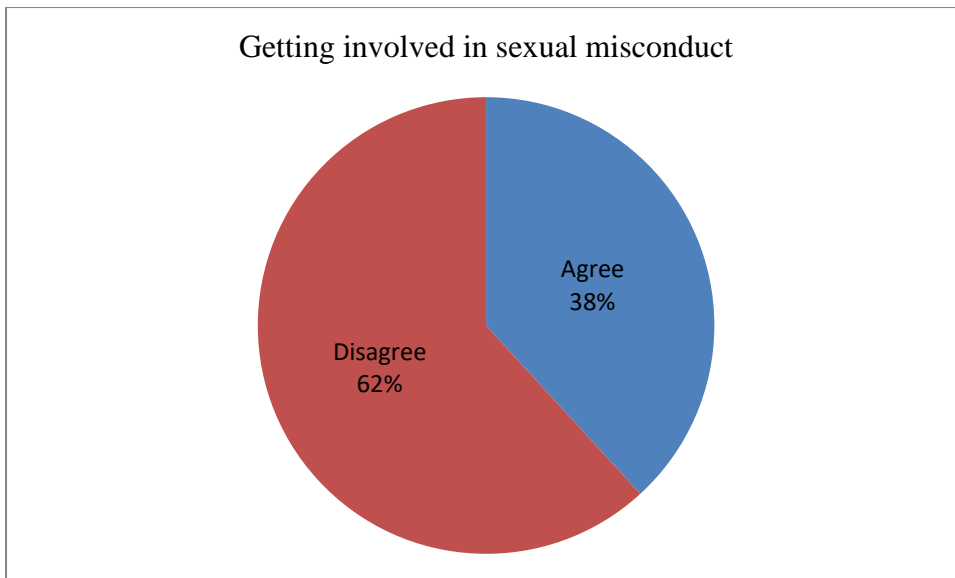
Even though drinking alcohol is a permissive cultural norm, it shows a deeper symptomatic spiritual departure for a church member, leading to the loss of Bible study, prayer, and interest in church matters. The individual may feel ashamed, guilty, unworthy, or condemned due to alcohol consumption, when they know they went against the church's standards publicly, the body temple, and temperance. This further conflicts with the person's understanding of the church's spiritual standards. The church pastors should take up responsibility to offer a friendly environment for guidance, counseling, scriptural nurture, and grace. When someone becomes addicted, they should be taken for rehabilitation. In agreement with the research, Batchelor asserts that alcohol intake is unholy and unclean, lowering Christian character.<sup>12</sup> The same is supported by Watts, who states, among other things, that alcohol drinking leads to backsliding.<sup>13</sup>

The eighth reason for backsliding was getting involved in sexual misconduct. Figure 17 is a pictorial representation of their opinions.

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<sup>12</sup> Doug Batchelor, *The Christian and Alcohol*. (Roseville: Amazing Facts, 2002), 32

<sup>13</sup> Neil Watts, "Backsliding and Apostasy: A Localized Study in Suburban Newcastle," *Theses Non-Avondale*, 1981, [https://research.avondale.edu.au/theses\\_non\\_Avondale/59](https://research.avondale.edu.au/theses_non_Avondale/59), 24-26, 58-59. Accessed 9 October 2023.



*Figure 16.* Opinion on Getting Involved in Sexual Misconduct as a Reason for Backsliding

On the response of being involved in sexual misconduct as the reason for leaving the church, 38% agreed, while 62% disagreed. The majority disagreed that getting involved in sexual misconduct was a reason for backsliding.

Sexual misconduct in this research denotes that a moral fall is not a primary vice for disconnection from church life and programs, but rather an individual choice and lifestyle. Sexual misconduct refers to infidelity to your spouse of the opposite gender, which includes, but is not limited to, extramarital relationships. It further suggests that the person engaging in this vice lacks spiritual grounding. However, an individual engaging in this misbehavior may feel guilty, ashamed, deeply convicted, and unworthy of forgiveness. It also suggests a fear of condemnation and disciplinary action from church membership, as this act contradicts biblical and church teachings regarding sexual purity. This further implies that the issue should be addressed through the teaching of truth, grace, mercy, repentance, and spiritual restoration. When the case becomes acute, a redemptive disciplinary process should be undertaken. In contrast to the research findings, Lewis asserts that individuals

indulging in this vice are not spiritually grounded and that sexual sins are among the contributing factors to church dropouts.<sup>14</sup>

The ninth reason for backsliding was conflict with church members. Figure 18 summarizes their opinions in a pictorial representation.

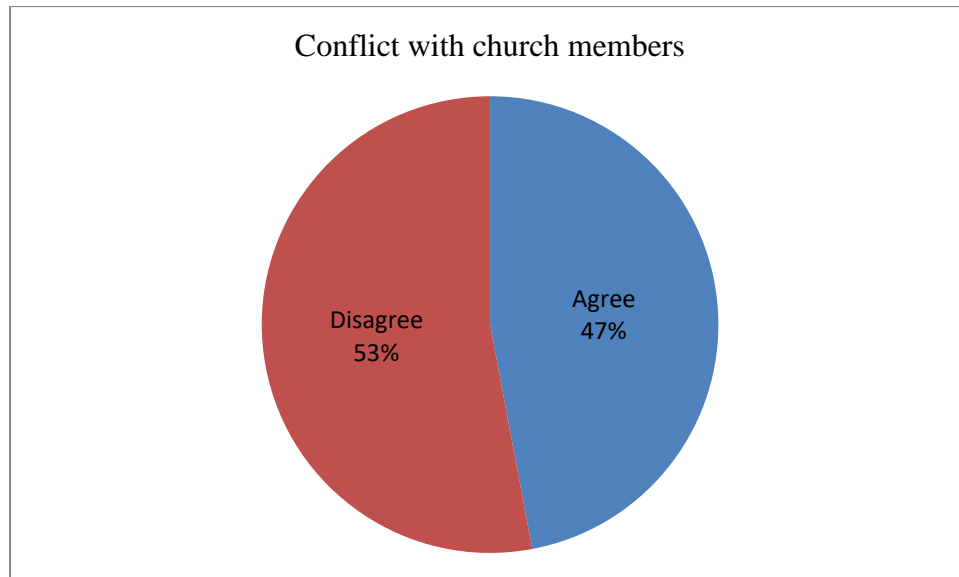


Figure 17. Opinion on Conflict with Church Members as a Reason for Backsliding

In response to conflict with church members as a reason for backsliding, 47% agreed, while 53% disagreed. Most respondents disagreed that conflicts with church members were reasons for backsliding. Pastoral observations indicate that conflicts with church members significantly contribute to backsliding. Unfortunately, research outcomes have contradicted this common understanding. This suggests that disagreements among the church members do not necessarily lead to spiritual decline and disconnection from the church. It reflects that spiritually rooted church believers can remain committed despite relational challenges. However, when church members

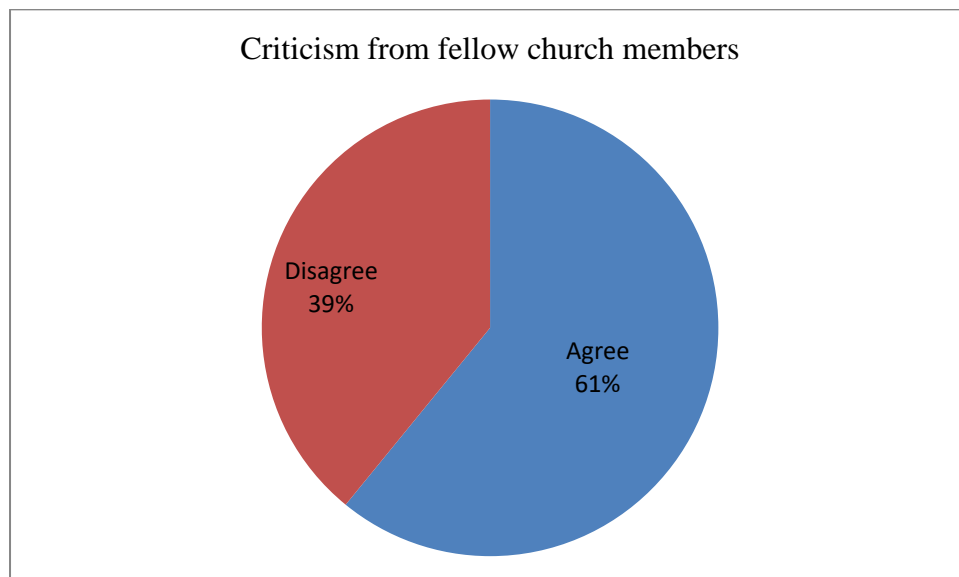
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<sup>14</sup> Clinton P. Lewis, "Falling from the Faith: Causes of Membership Dropout in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists," *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 395 (1997): 76, 78. Assessed 20 September 2023.

experience unresolved conflicts, it may lead to spiritual decline and a departure from one's once-accepted faith, due to feelings of condemnation, betrayal, gossip, and rejection. The implication here is that church pastors should make the church a place where love, forgiveness, humility, fellowship, and reconciliation are preached. Conflicts should be addressed with teaching on faith, grace, truth, and accountability. It disagrees with Lewis's<sup>15</sup> and Masillamony's<sup>16</sup> research, which states that conflict with church members, unresolved family, interpersonal, and conflicts with church members may lead to non-attendance at church services and church dropouts. If left unaddressed, this condition can weaken the spiritual foundation, and members may become more susceptible to leaving the church.

The tenth reason for backsliding was criticism from fellow church members.

Figure 19 summarizes their opinions in a pictorial representation.



*Figure 18.* Opinion of Criticism from Fellow Church Members as a Reason for Backsliding

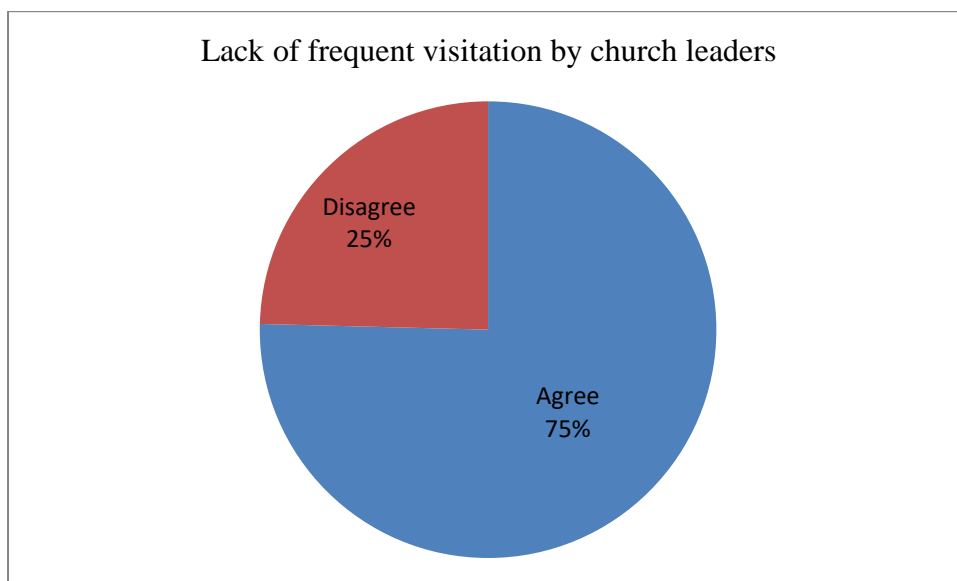
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<sup>15</sup> Clinton P. Lewis, "Falling from the Faith: Causes of Membership Dropout in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists," *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 395 (1997): 76, 78. Assessed 20 September 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Paulraj Masillamony, "Training Laity to Minister to Inactive Members in the North Tamil Conference" (2000), 45-54. Professional Dissertations DMin. 507. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/507>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/507>. Accessed 28 February 2024.

In response to criticism from fellow church members as a reason for backsliding, 61% agreed, while 39% disagreed. The majority agreed that criticism from fellow church members was a reason for backsliding. This means that negative, judgmental, and unloving criticism lowers a person's self-esteem and creates emotional hurt, leading to alienation, feelings of unwelcome, and discouragement, which can result in backsliding. Public criticism may contribute to the erosion of self-worth and a decline in spirituality. It eventually weakens one's faith, leading to the distortion of God's loving character. Given this, it implies that Church leaders should encourage and teach humility, peace, genuine support, and the spirit of encouragement, so that church members can grow in a safe environment. Lewis's research supports this, saying that members' criticism is one of the factors that causes church dropouts.<sup>17</sup>

The eleventh reason for backsliding was the lack of frequent visitation by church leaders. Figure 20 is a summary in pictorial form of their opinions.



*Figure 19.* The Respondents' Opinions on the Lack of Frequent Visitation by Church Leaders as a Reason for Backsliding

<sup>17</sup> Clinton P. Lewis, "Falling from the Faith."

In response to church leaders' lack of frequent visitation as a reason for backsliding, 75% agreed, while 25% disagreed. That means the majority agreed that a lack of frequent visitation by church leaders was a reason for backsliding.

This means that the respondents felt neglected, there was no pastoral care during their times of challenges, and there were strained relationships. The church leaders were not discipling church members, nor were they shepherding the sick, those struggling, and the newly baptized members. This implies that church pastors should focus on shepherding souls, providing comfort, encouragement, correction, and guidance through regular visitations. Salazar asserts that visitation is a primary task of the church. Everybody should serve as a minister and a servant as well. Elders, deacons, and deaconesses should carry out this duty, and all church members should visit and reach out to the inactive church dropouts.<sup>18</sup> This also agrees with the Deacons and Deaconesses Handbook, which states that the primary duties of the Deacons include visitations to church members, new converts, shut-ins, bereaved families, the sick in hospitals and homes.<sup>19</sup>

The twelfth reason for backsliding was discrimination. Figure 21 summarizes their opinions in pictorial form.

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<sup>18</sup> Salazar, 51-57.

<sup>19</sup> Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, (Silver Spring, Maryland: Review & Ministerial Association, 2025), 68, 107-120 <https://www.ministerialassociation.com>. <https://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com> › ministries. Accessed 4 May 2025.

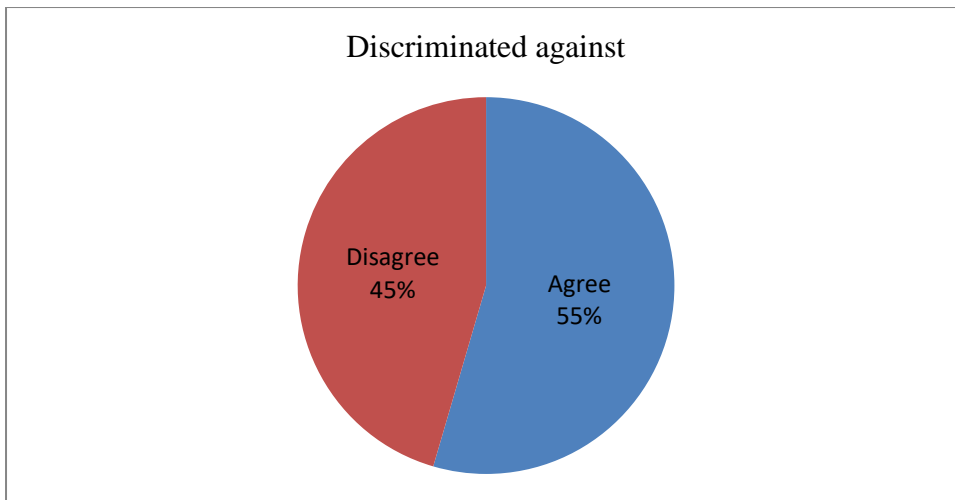


Figure 20. Opinion on Being Discriminated against as a Reason for Backsliding

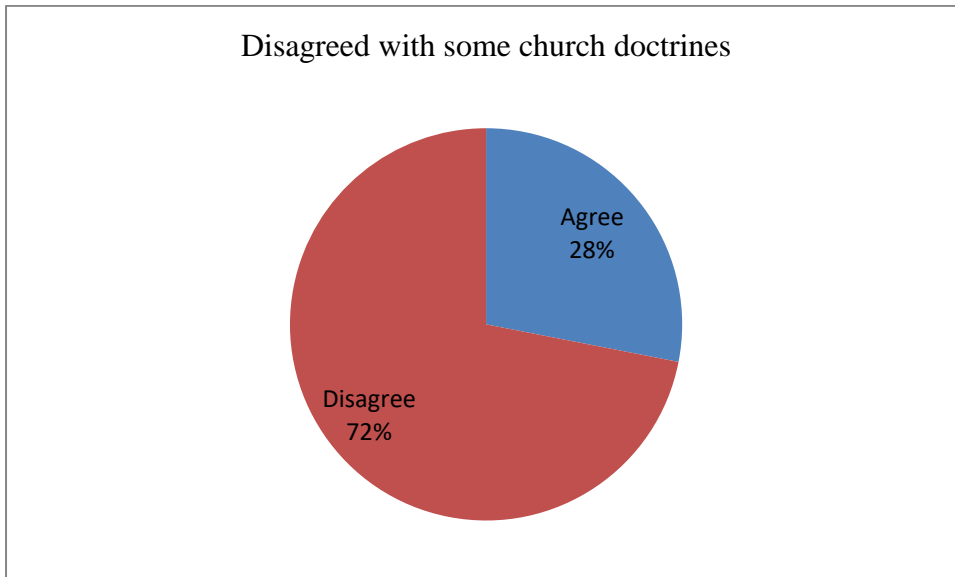
On the response of being discriminated against as a reason for backsliding, 55% agreed, while 45% disagreed. The majority agreed that being discriminated against was a reason for backsliding.

This indicates that in the church, there was marginalization based on gender, social status, age, and family background. The respondents were not valued or spiritually protected as the body of Christ; there was a lack of justice, equality, love, and Christian brotherhood unity, and they could not force their place where they were not accepted. The implication is that the church leaders should take the responsibility to teach members how to care for those who are low, rejected, dejected, and discriminated against. The church should be a place where the gospel of equality, love, and unity in Christ is preached. This is in agreement with Nielsen’s study, which states that being discriminated against, among other factors, is one of the reasons for disassociation from church membership.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Louis C. Nielsen, “Disassociation: An Investigation into the Contributing Factors of Backsliding and Separation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan,” *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 56 (1977), 4. <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/hrsa/56>. Assessed 20 September 2023.

The thirteenth reason for backsliding was disagreement with some church members. Figure 22 is a pictorial representation of their opinions.



*Figure 21.* Opinion on Disagreed with Some Church Doctrines as a Reason for Backsliding

On the response of disagreeing with some church doctrines as a reason for backsliding, 28% agreed, while 72% disagreed. The majority disagreed that disagreeing with some church doctrines was a reason for backsliding.

This suggests that the respondents experienced no disconnection between their personal beliefs and doctrinal teachings, which could lead to disengagement or rejection of their faith. Doctrinal disagreement may result from insufficient biblical instruction, misunderstanding, or a lack of knowledge about fundamental beliefs. The implication here is that church pastors should create a well-structured teaching program with pastoral support to foster a comprehensive understanding of church doctrines. Nonetheless, Nielsen’s study found that most former members of the

Seventh-day Adventist Church still believe in the Adventist doctrines and regard it as the true church.<sup>21</sup>

The fourteenth reason for backsliding was sickness. Figure 23 is a pictorial representation of their opinions.

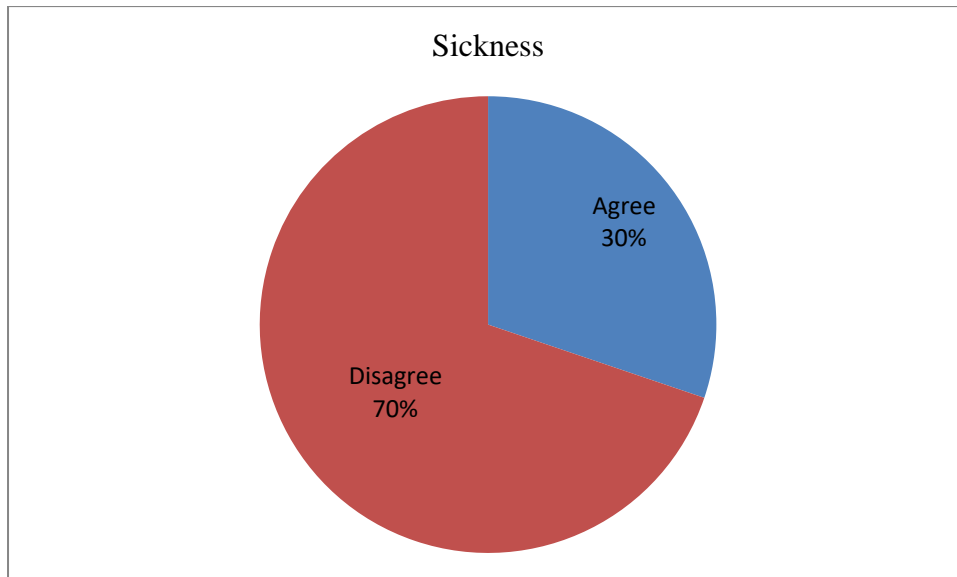


Figure 22. Opinion on Sickness as a Reason for Backsliding

On the response of sickness being the reason for leaving the church, 30% agreed, while 70% disagreed. The majority disagreed that sickness was the reason for backsliding. This does not imply that sickness cannot cause backsliding or falling away from church.

It indicates that church members are spiritually grounded and remain faithful to God despite serious health challenges. This implies that the church deaconate department should establish spiritual mechanisms, including prayer, compassionate ministries, encouragement, and assistance to the sick, to minimize the likelihood that the sick will stop attending church. While ill individuals may not be able to participate

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<sup>21</sup> Nielsen, 1977, 5-6

in church services, they do not fall into the category of backsliders. Their absence from church is a genuine and understandable reason that may be only temporary. Burch disagrees with the above research by affirming that sickness or poor health are among the external reasons for backsliding.<sup>22</sup>

The fifteenth reason for backsliding was due to the loss of a family member.

Figure 24 is a pictorial representation of their opinions.

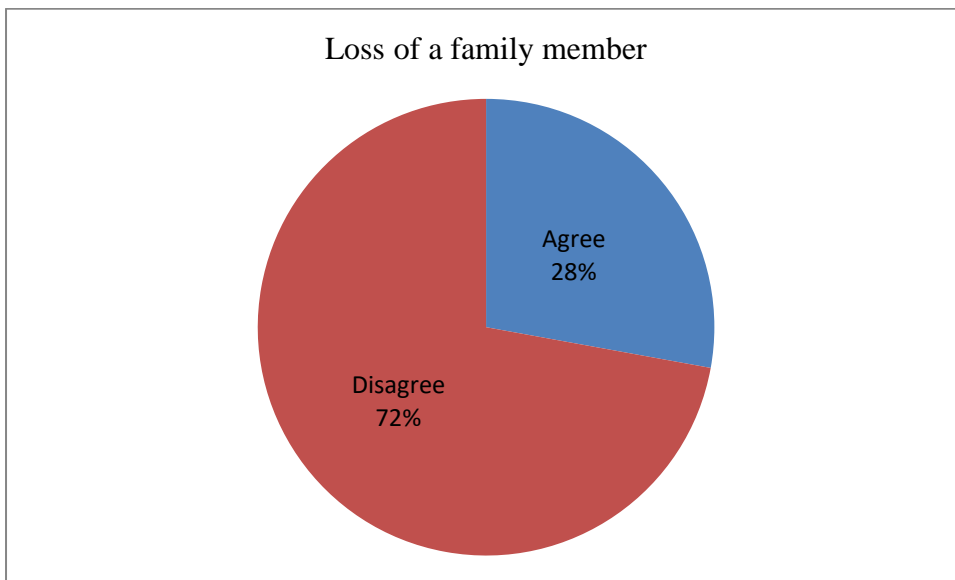


Figure 23. Loss of Family Members as a Reason for Backsliding

On the response of losing a family member as the reason for leaving the church, 28% agreed, while 72% disagreed. The majority disagreed that the loss of a family member made them backslide.

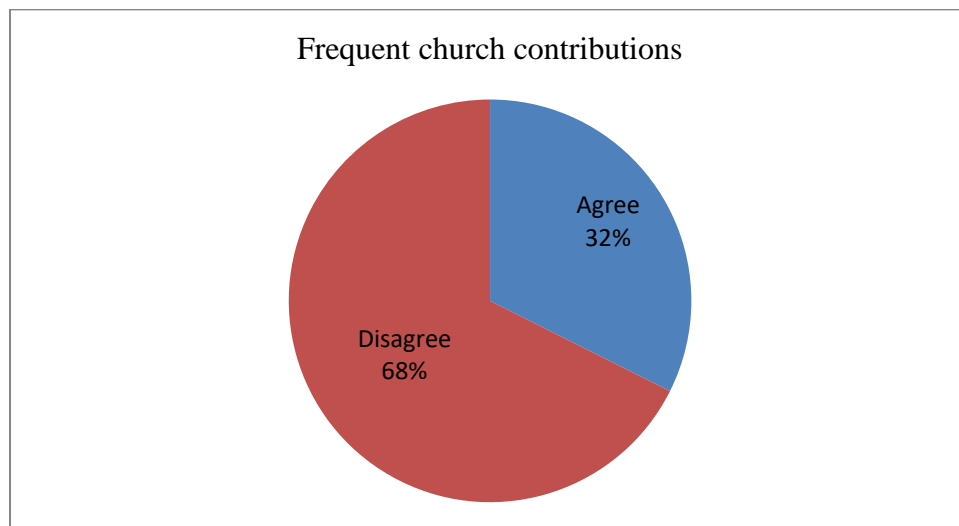
The suggestion is that losing a family member, though painful, should not commonly drive one away from God or lead to spiritual withdrawal. Many individuals turn to God in their times of grief, seeking comfort, hope, and meaning through prayer and the reading of biblical texts. The implication here is that church pastors should teach church members on the doctrine of the state of death. They

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<sup>22</sup> Burch, 23-27.

should make people understand that death should be viewed as a natural phenomenon caused by sin, which no one can control; no one can blame anyone for its occurrence, nor can anyone blame God. Church leaders should support bereaved families spiritually and materially, and by allowing them to fully experience God’s presence during their mourning period. Masillamony disagrees with the research, asserting that the loss of a family member or spouse is one of the contributing factors that can lead a church member to become inactive and ultimately backslide from attending church weekly.<sup>23</sup> The church’s responsibility is to support bereaved families by providing both spiritual and material assistance, enabling them to feel loved, comforted, and spiritually upheld.

The sixteenth reason for backsliding was due to frequent financial contributions to the church. Figure 25 is a pictorial representation of their opinions.



*Figure 24.* Opinion on Frequent Financial Church Contributions as a Reason for Backsliding

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<sup>23</sup> Paulraj Masillamony, “Training Laity to Minister to Inactive Members in the North Tamil Conference” (2000), 45-54. Professional Dissertations DMin. 507. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/507>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/507>. Accessed 28 February 2024.

Lastly, concerning frequent church contributions as a reason for disassociation, 32% agreed, while 68% disagreed. This indicates that the majority disagreed that frequent church contributions was a reason for backsliding.

Contrary to this study's expectations, most respondents opposed the idea that multiple financial contributions from church members led to their backsliding. This indicates that church members were neither burdened nor exploited by regular contributions; rather, they viewed it as a sign of strong faith, loyalty, spiritual growth, and love for the gospel mission. This implies that church leaders should clearly teach people about proper financial stewardship. Church members should be taught a culture of cheerful, voluntary generosity to support the ministry. This aligns with Ahorator, who affirms that the church requires monetary contributions to expand the Kingdom of God through the ministry of His word and welfare promotion, as long as there are qualified individuals to manage and direct the finances toward prioritized goals.<sup>24</sup>

In summary, the reasons and root causes of men's backsliding from church membership include working on the Sabbath, loss of faith and interest, drinking alcohol, criticism from fellow church members, lack of frequent visitations by church leaders, and discrimination against others.

## **Research Question 2**

How was the backslider personally involved during church membership before dropping out?

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<sup>24</sup> Christian Regobeth Kofi Ahorator and G. S. Solutons. "Financial management issues in church organizations." *Glisten Strategic Solutions* (2009): 1-10. Accessed 5 May 2025. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christian-Regobeth-Kofi-Ahorator/publication/208939949\\_Financial\\_Management\\_Issues\\_in\\_Church\\_Organisations/links/009deb7d696ad26261b57b73/Financial-Management-Issues-in-Church-Organisations.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christian-Regobeth-Kofi-Ahorator/publication/208939949_Financial_Management_Issues_in_Church_Organisations/links/009deb7d696ad26261b57b73/Financial-Management-Issues-in-Church-Organisations.pdf)

This research question aimed to understand how the backslider was personally involved as a church member before dropping out. This question was divided into two sections: the first sought to gather personal experiences during their church membership, while the second focused on their practices and involvement as a church member.

This section asked the respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statements made about their personal experiences during church membership. The charts below display the respondents' agreement levels with the statements concerning their personal experience during church membership. They summarize the descriptive responses given in percentages. The charts below show respondents' opinions regarding their personal experiences during church membership.

The first response was whether Church members were friendly during church membership.

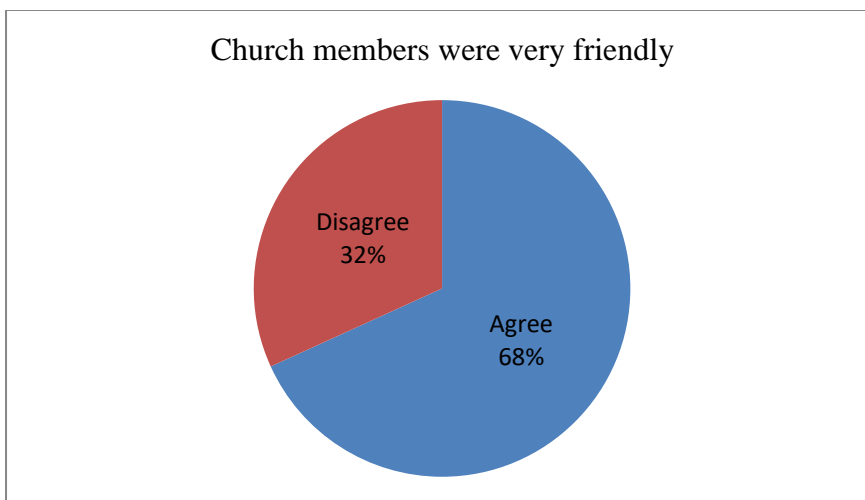


Figure 25 Respondents' opinion on whether Church members were friendly during membership

On the responses, whether Church members were friendly during church membership, 68% agreed and 32% disagreed. The majority agreed that the church members were friendly during church membership.

This shows that church members were socially and emotionally supportive, bore one another's burdens, provided member-to-member care, were welcoming, had healthy relationships, and were active in evangelism and community outreach programs. In reference to the above, the implication is that church leaders should embark on addressing deeper spiritual and relational needs. This aligns with Hassan, who asserts that building a relationship with Christ first can positively impact personal relationships with one another.<sup>25</sup>

The second response was whether Church leaders were relating well with the church members.

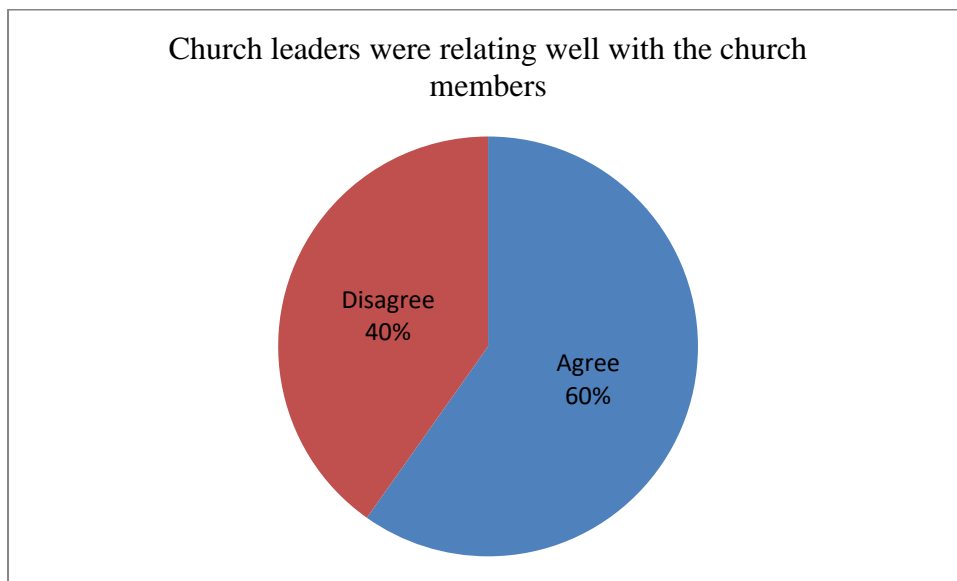


Figure 26. Respondents' opinion whether Church leaders were relating well with church members

Regarding whether Church leaders were relating well with the church members, 60% agreed and 40% disagreed. That means the majority of church leaders related well with church members. It suggests that church leaders fostered a conducive environment of trust, accountability, respect, servanthood, supportive relationships, successful ministry, spiritual nourishment, and harmony. The

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<sup>25</sup> Al Hassan, 114-119.

implication is that church leaders need to leverage their relationships with members to reclaim, retain, nurture, and sustain them within the church. Church leaders should capitalize on the relational leadership of trust and care to nurture spiritual resilience and prevent backsliding. For church leaders to relate well, Pereyra states that church members must foster Love for God and love for one another; this will, in turn, make the Christian faith appealing to others.<sup>26</sup>

The third response was whether the SDA doctrines were Biblical.

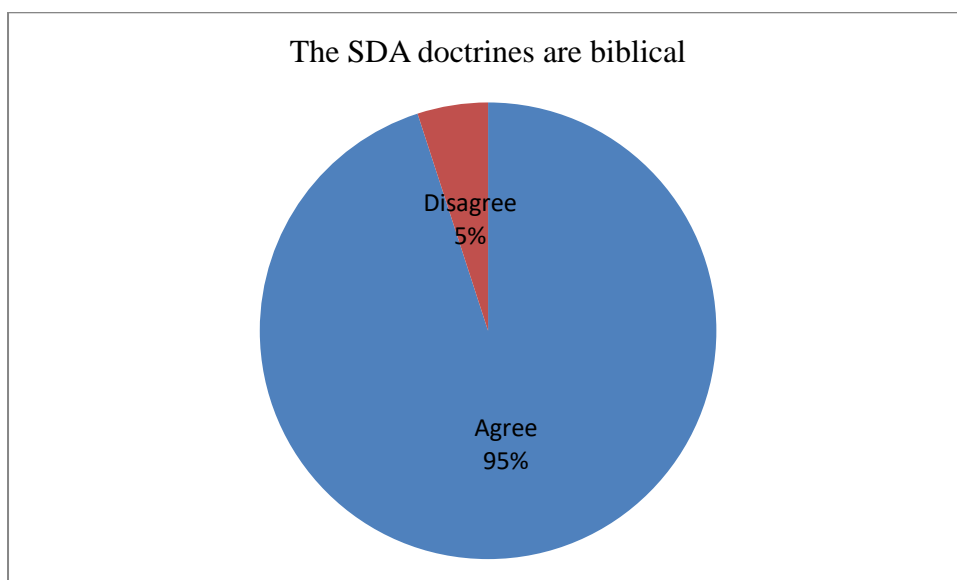


Figure 27. Respondents' opinion whether the SDA Doctrines are Biblical

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<sup>26</sup> Ruben Pereyra, "A Process of Self-Assessment and Goal Setting for a Latin American Local Congregation as a Possible Means to Create the Necessary Conditions for Church Renewal, Fruitful Evangelism, and Effective Nurture" (1980), 47-48. Professional Dissertations DMin. 567. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/567>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/567>. Accessed 26 February 2024.

On the response whether the SDA doctrines are Biblical, 95% agreed and 5% disagreed. This means that the majority of the backsliders agreed that the SDA doctrines are Biblical.

The SDA Church believes that its core fundamental beliefs (doctrines) originate directly from the Bible, God's inspired word, rather than from church tradition, creeds, or external authorities. This implies that church pastors should be dedicated to enlightening church members about the importance of commitment to biblical authority, truth, and transparency as the foundation of their doctrines.

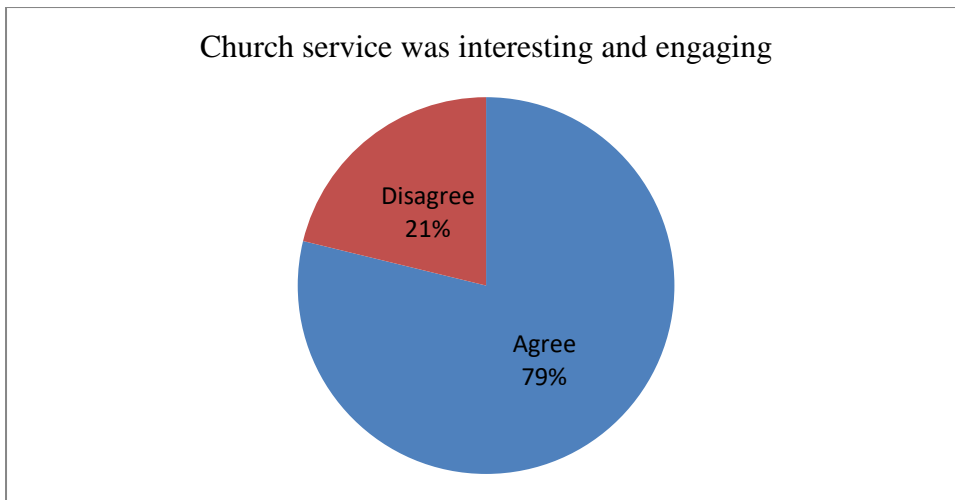
A study conducted by Nielsen<sup>27</sup> and Amiri<sup>28</sup> found that most former members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church still believed in Adventist doctrines and regarded the church as the true church. The doctrines were biblically grounded, relating to the belief in God, the Trinity, the nature of humanity, salvation, the church, Christian living, and last things.

The fourth response is whether the church service was interesting and engaging.

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<sup>27</sup> Nielsen, 1977, 5-6

<sup>28</sup> Sayed Mahbub Hasan Amiri, "Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs: A Theological Perspective." (2025). Accessed 5 May 2025. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sayed-Mahbub-Hasan-Amiri-2/publication/390836012\\_Seventh-day\\_Adventist\\_Beliefs\\_A\\_Theological\\_Perspective/links/67ffd4cbded43315572a5298/Seventh-day-Adventist-Beliefs-A-Theological-Perspective.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sayed-Mahbub-Hasan-Amiri-2/publication/390836012_Seventh-day_Adventist_Beliefs_A_Theological_Perspective/links/67ffd4cbded43315572a5298/Seventh-day-Adventist-Beliefs-A-Theological-Perspective.pdf).



*Figure 28.* Respondents’ Opinions on Whether the Church Services are Interesting and Engaging

The response regarding whether the church service was interesting and engaging was 70% agreed, and 21% disagreed. That means that the majority of the backsliders agreed that the church service was interesting and engaging when they were church members. This indicates that the church programs were relevant, meaningful, and spiritually enriching to the church members. It also suggests that the service, which includes lesson discussion, sermons, evangelism, outreach activities and music program, helped people to connect with God.

The implication here is that the church leadership should emphasize engaged lesson discussion, appealing sermons, inspiring music, and outreach services that address the spiritual, social, and emotional needs of the church congregation. When there is a renewed church congregation, as asserted by Pereyra, a new lifestyle will emerge that, in turn, makes church members’ faith appealing to others and attracts more new members to the church.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ruben Pereyra, “A Process of Self-Assessment and Goal Setting for a Latin American Local Congregation as a Possible Means to Create the Necessary Conditions for Church Renewal, Fruitful Evangelism, and Effective Nurture” (1980), 47-48. Professional Dissertations DMin. 567. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/567>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/567>. Accessed 26 February 2024.

The fifth response is whether the church provided financial support for those in need.

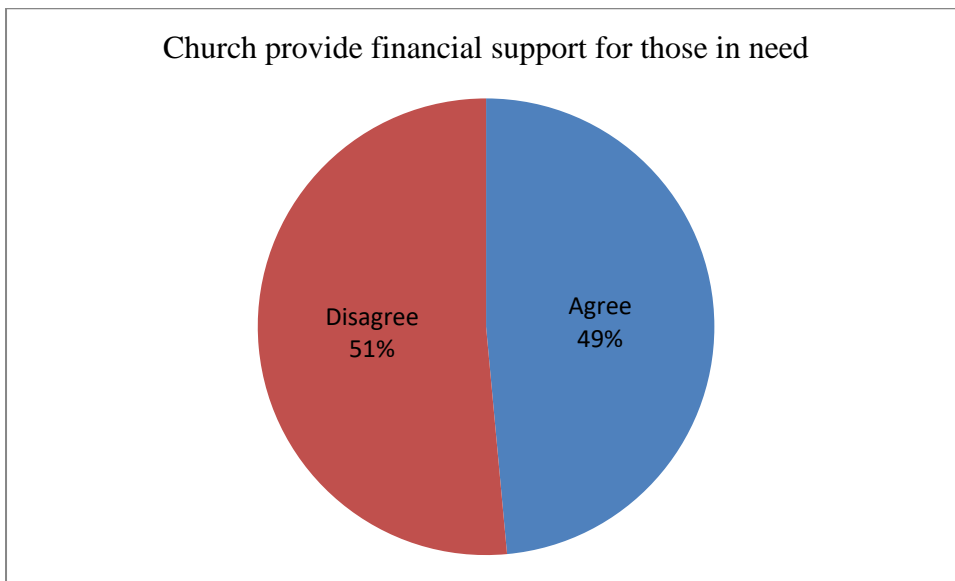


Figure 29. Respondents' Opinion on Whether the Church Provided Financial Support for Those in Need

Regarding whether the church provided financial support for those in need, 49% agreed and 51% disagreed. This question almost got an equal response; however, the majority of the backsliders supported the idea that the church did not give financial support to all those in need during church membership.

The church has always taught people through seminars about compassionate ministry and generous giving to support God's mission. When there is a lack of support, it indicates a disconnection between doctrine and practical action. Biblical scripture has consistently advocated for caring for widows, orphans, the poor, and those in need; failure to do so implies falling short of biblical expectations. This implies that the church pastors and elders should take on the responsibility of addressing this critical gap and aligning with the biblical model of compassion, love,

generosity, and impartiality. Lewis alludes that people drop out from church due to unmet financial and material needs.<sup>30</sup>

The sixth response is whether the Church had conflict resolution management programs.

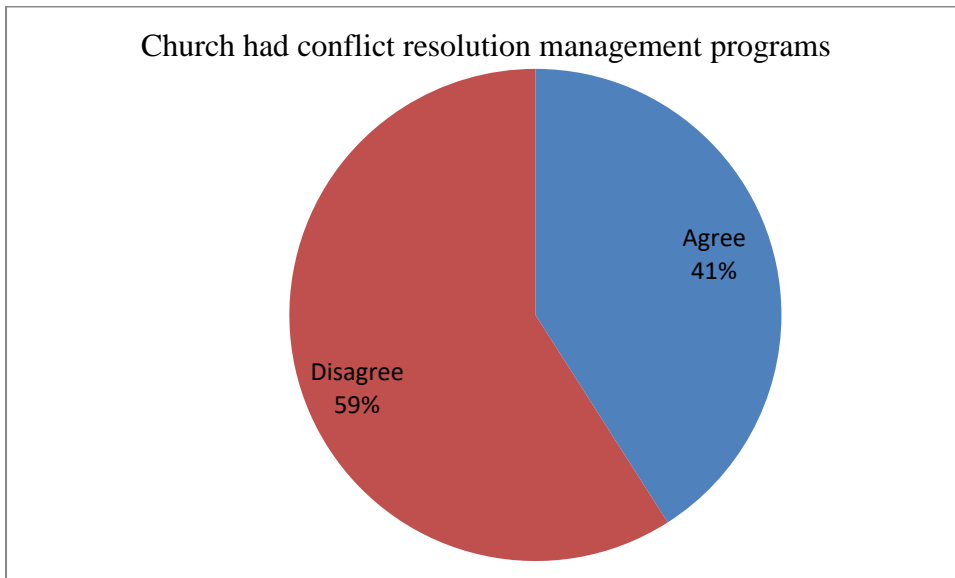


Figure 30. Regarding Whether the Church Had Conflict Resolution Management Programs

Regarding whether the Church had conflict resolution management programs, 41% agree and 59 % disagree. This means that most backsliders disagreed that the church had a conflict resolution management program during church membership. One of the reasons why there are backsliders could be that there were unresolved conflicts within the church. The lack of a conflict management team and church structures to address these conflicts becomes a compounding factor that drives away members from the church. Conflicts are normal to any organization or institution, but what makes a difference is the management of the said conflict.

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<sup>30</sup> Clinton P. Lewis, "Falling from the Faith: Causes of Membership Dropout in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists," *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 395 (1997): 76, 78. Assessed 20 September 2023.

This implies that the church pastor and elders should promote harmony and reconciliation within the church to prevent serious structural and spiritual weaknesses. Without a conflict resolution department, the church will struggle to maintain healthy relationships, promote healing, and exemplify the biblical principles of reconciliation, humility, and forgiveness. Conflicts, as affirmed by Mekuriaw<sup>31</sup>, Lee,<sup>32</sup> and Afolaranm,<sup>33</sup> assert that they can be resolved by living in harmony, loving your enemy, making amends with one another, and seeking peace through forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. Finally, conflicts can be approached through mediative dialogue, prayer, compromise, arbitration, counselling, consultation, and persuasion.

The seventh response is whether church members did not look down on others.

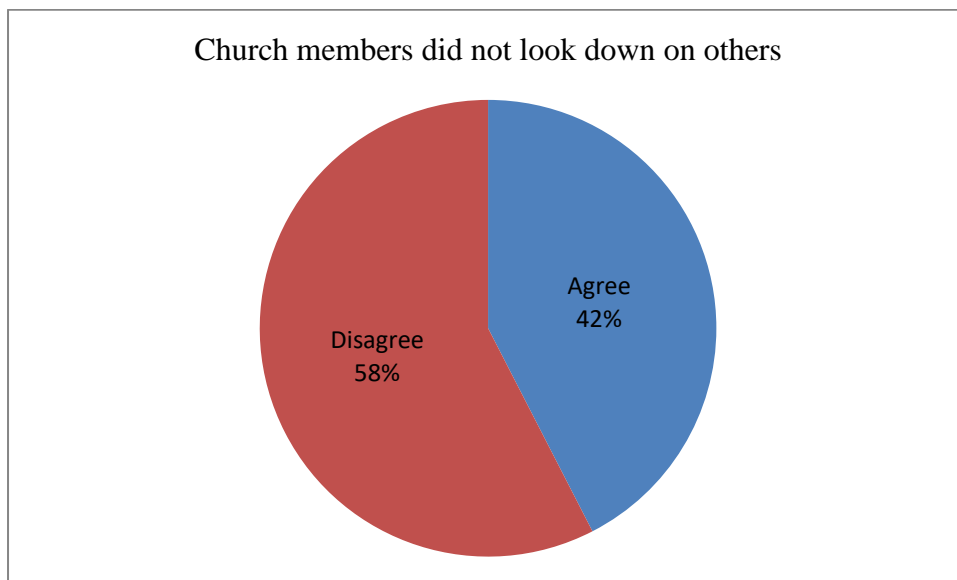


Figure 31. Respondents' Opinion Whether Church Members Looked Down on Others

<sup>31</sup> Mengist Tarekegn Mekuriaw, "The conflict resolution roles of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church." *International Social Science Journal* 75, no. 255 (2025): 179-191. Accessed 13 May 2025. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/issj.12544>.

<sup>32</sup> Young Woon Lee, "A conflict resolution approach to peace education in the local church." *Torch Trinity Journal* 15, no. 2 (2012): 141-166. Accessed 13 May 2025. [http://www.ttgst.ac.kr/upload/ttgst\\_resources13/20135-316.pdf](http://www.ttgst.ac.kr/upload/ttgst_resources13/20135-316.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Adebayo Ola Afolaranmi, "Conflict Resolution and the Autonomy of the Local Baptist Church: A Critical Review." *International Journal of Religious and Cultural Practice* 7, no. 1 (2022): 11. Accessed 13 May 2025. [www.iiardjournals.org](http://www.iiardjournals.org). <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8057-137X>.

On the response whether the church did not look down on others, 42 % agreed and 58 % disagreed. This suggests that a disconnection existed between the spiritual and relational aspects within the church. There was a spirit of pride, judgment, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness. This behavior may create division, discouragement, spiritual decline, and isolation. This implies that the church leaders should champion spiritual revival, transformation, humility, and relational healing within the church, in accordance with biblical principles. In agreement with the research outcome, Hassan asserts that the apostle Paul emphasized building a relationship with Jesus, which will, in turn, impact an effective personal relationship with one another, alleviating the attitude of looking down upon others.<sup>34</sup>

The eighth response was Respondents' opinion on whether the church members accepted people as they are

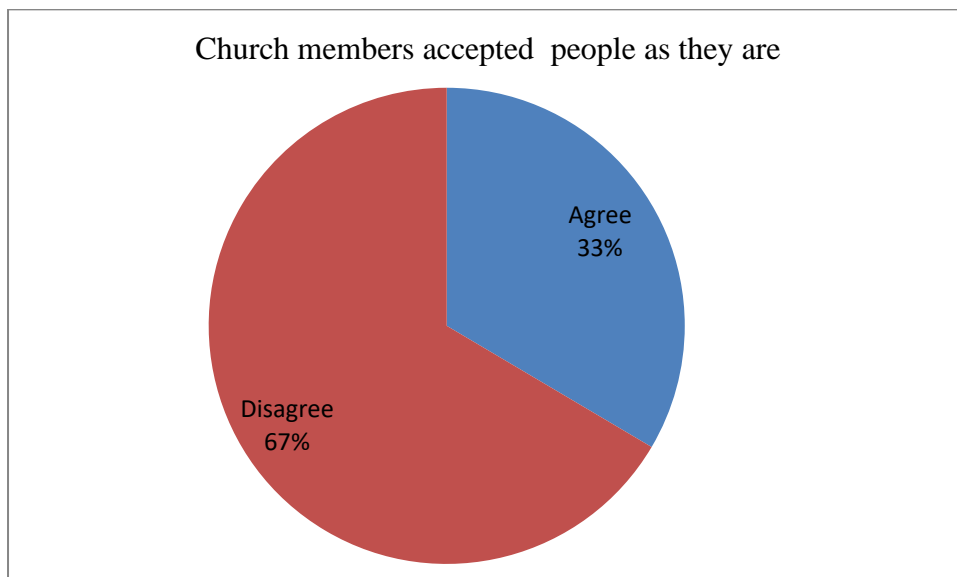


Figure 32. Opinions on Whether Members Accepted People As They Are

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<sup>34</sup> Al Hassan, 114-119.

On whether church members accepted people as they were, 33% agreed, while 67% disagreed. This means that the majority of the backsliders felt that they were not accepted as they were.

This indicates that the church did not practice an inclusive, grace-filled love of Christ Jesus, reflecting a character of external conformity instead of genuine spiritual transformation. The church demonstrated a tendency to reject other members based on appearance, background, social status, or even past sins. This implies that the church pastor should strive to teach church leaders and members to embrace the spirit of grace, acceptance, love, and belonging, and provide a space for others to grow.

There was a lack of genuine love, a love that embraces and prioritizes the welfare of its people before guiding them toward transformation. The research agrees with Nielsen, who identifies the following factors that illustrate the opposite of acceptance: lack of interaction with friends, discrimination, neglect, humiliation, rejection, dislike, and social degradation.<sup>35</sup>

The ninth response was whether church members shared love for all people

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<sup>35</sup> Louis C. Nielsen, "Disassociation: An Investigation into the Contributing Factors of Backsliding and Separation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan," *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 56 (1977), 4. <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/hrsa/56>. Assessed 20 September 2023.

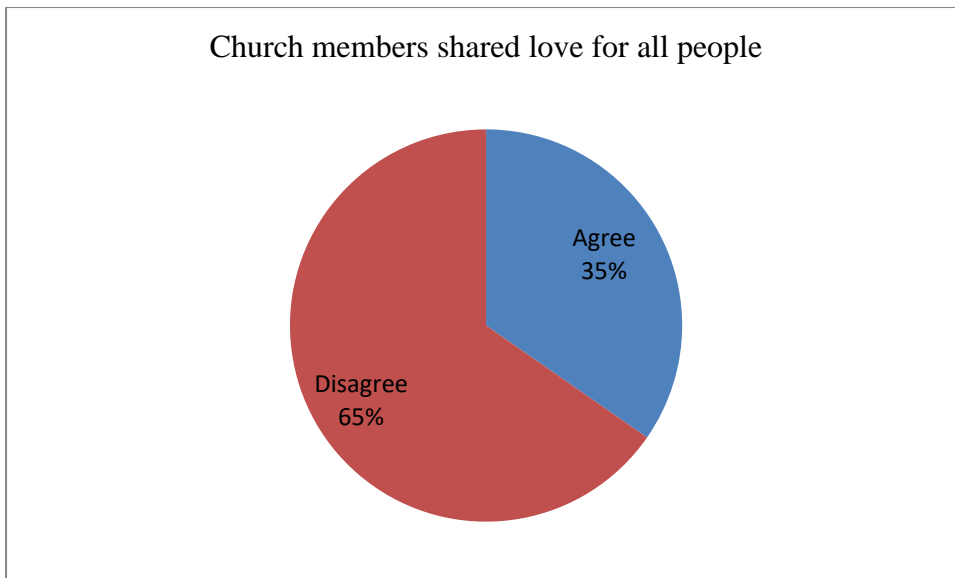


Figure 33. Opinions on Whether Members Shared Love for All People

On whether church members showed love for all people, 35% agreed, while 65% disagreed. This means that the majority disagreed that the church members shared love for all people. This represents spiritual immaturity, a departure from the core principles of the Christian faith and Jesus' teachings on loving your neighbor as you love yourself, regardless of their background. The opposite is true: indifference, partiality, broken relationships, and hostility. Church leaders should boldly teach that love is not optional; it should foster love for God and for one another as well, it should also reflect the evidence of genuine faith, and confirm the effectiveness of the gospel ministry.

Members did not exercise love for God and their neighbors as Jesus taught. As mentioned above, among the things Nielsen stated, unloved, rejected, and disliked are among the negative vices affecting church members.<sup>36</sup>

The tenth response was whether the church members were forgiving

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<sup>36</sup> Louis C. Nielsen, "Disassociation: An Investigation into the Contributing Factors of Backsliding and Separation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan," *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 56 (1977), 4. <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/hrsa/56>. Assessed 20 September 2023.

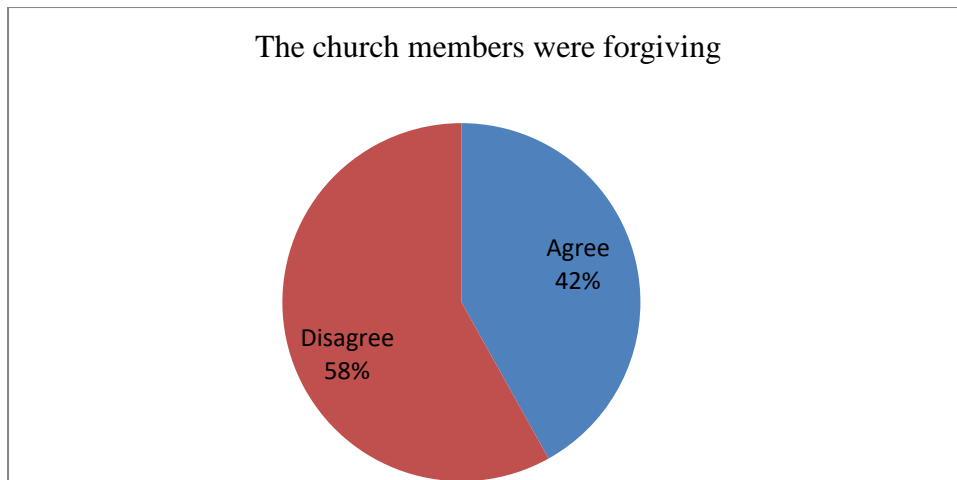


Figure 34. Opinions on Whether Church Members Were Forgiving

On whether the church members were forgiving, 42% agreed, while 58% disagreed. This means that the majority disagreed with the notion that church members were forgiving.

Forgiveness is a key teaching of genuine Christianity and spiritual maturity. Its absence signals spiritual weakness within the church congregation and a refusal to obey the command of Jesus Christ regarding forgiveness, which is one of the elements He taught about prayer. When unforgiveness exists among church members, resentment, gossip, backbiting, bitterness, grudges, and disagreement flourish within the church. This leads to emotional pain, brokenness, and stalled spiritual development. The church pastor should urgently take a bold stand to fearlessly teach about repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, brotherhood, sisterhood, and the healing of broken hearts. Factors that may contribute to an unforgiving heart, as mentioned by Nielsen, include feeling unloved, rejected, disliked, and lacking interaction with members.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Louis C. Nielsen, "Disassociation: An Investigation into the Contributing Factors of Backsliding and Separation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan," *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 56 (1977), 4. <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/hrsa/56>. Assessed 20 September 2023.

The eleventh response was whether church members were genuinely caring

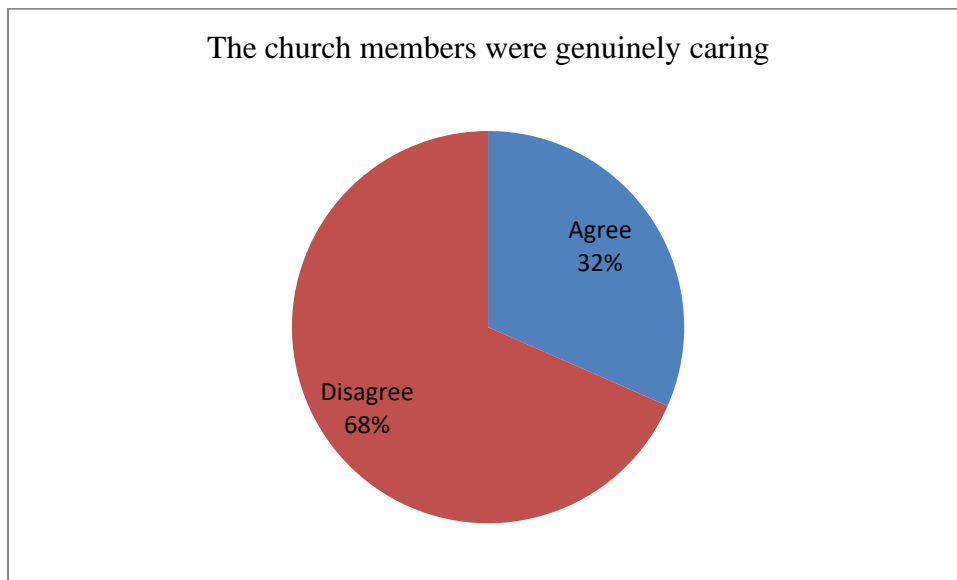


Figure 35. Opinion Whether Members Were Genuinely Caring

On whether members were genuinely caring, 32% agreed, while 68% disagreed. This means that the majority disagreed that church members were genuinely caring.

This clearly indicates that the church is not reflecting the love and mission of Jesus Christ. It also suggests that the church has spiritual indifference, self-seeking love, and complacency, rather than genuine Christian love, empathy, and compassion. The church pastor and elders should initiate revival in discipleship, compassionate ministry, true love, and family-building church, following the example of Jesus.

Among other things, Nielsen<sup>38</sup> and Salazar<sup>39</sup> mentioned that factors contributing to

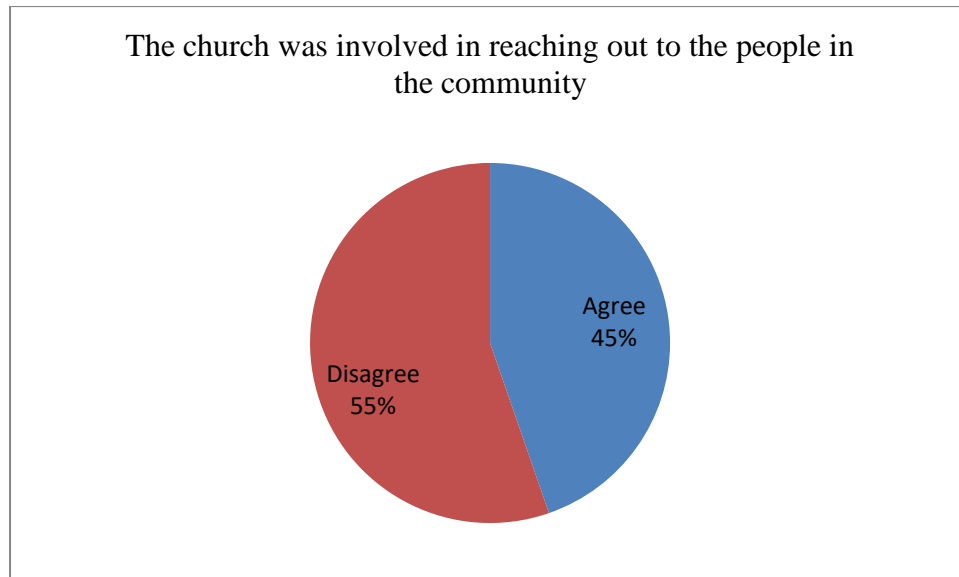
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<sup>38</sup> Louis C. Nielsen, "Disassociation: An Investigation into the Contributing Factors of Backsliding and Separation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan," *Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 56 (1977), 4. <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/hrsa/56>. Accessed 20 September 2023.

<sup>39</sup> Rodolfo N. Salazar, "A Lay Visitation Program to Help Reclaim Inactive Members at the Hillsboro Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hillsboro, Oregon," *Andrews University Digital Commons @ Andrews University*, no. 114 (2011): 59. Accessed 14 September 2023. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin>.

church members stopping their attendance at services include feeling ignored, the sense that nobody cares if they come or not, and not being visited or told that they are missed.

The twelfth response was whether the church was involved in reaching out to the people in the community.



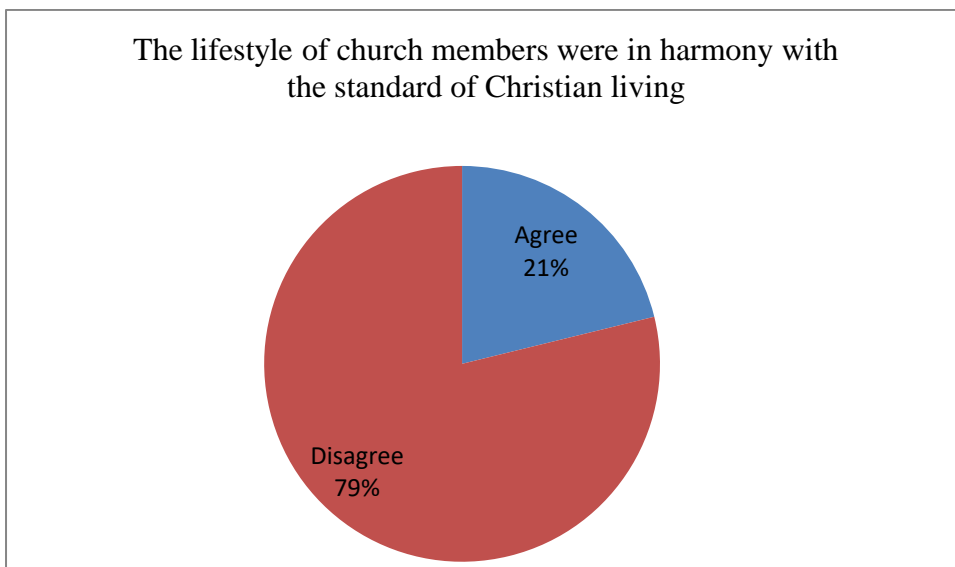
*Figure 36.* Opinion Whether the Church Was Involved in Reaching Out to the People in the Community

On whether the church was involved in reaching out to the people in the community, 45% agreed, while 55% disagreed. This means that the majority disagreed that the church was involved in reaching out to the people in the community.

It is Jesus' commission to His disciples, as well as to us today, to go out and make disciples of all nations. Therefore, a community outreach program is put in place to fulfill Christ's commission to enlighten the world with His word. When the church is not involved, it shows a disconnection between the church and Christ's central mission. The community includes those who are spiritually disengaged, hurting, bereaved, orphans, widows, and the vulnerable. The church pastor should

take responsibility for teaching and reminding church members about the church's mission, vision, core values, and compassionate ministry. This is in contrary to the Great Commission, as asserted by Hinds, which was designed to win converts from the community, teach them the way of the Lord, offer them a church home for spiritual and social fellowship in preparation for heaven.<sup>40</sup>

The thirteenth response on whether the lifestyle of church members was in harmony with the standard of Christian living.



*Figure 37.* Opinions Whether the Lifestyle of Church Members Were in Harmony with the Standard of Christian Living

On whether the lifestyle of the church members was in harmony with the standard of Christian living, 21% agreed, while 79% disagreed. This means that the majority disagreed that the lifestyle of the church members was in harmony with the standards of Christian living.

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<sup>40</sup> David W. Hinds, "Retention of New Members into the Caffin Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church" (2001), 33, 34. Professional Dissertations DMin. 465. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/465/>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/465/>. Accessed 27 February 2024.

This indicated a disconnection between behavior and Christian belief. The church members were not experiencing a sincere spiritual reformation, which might have led to skepticism, church divisions, and a rejection of the true Christian faith. When the church members' lifestyle was not in harmony with the standard of Christian living, it created hindrances to spiritual revival, Bible study, and persistence in prayer. The church pastors, elders, and members should seriously embrace biblical teaching and purposeful discipleship. The research disagrees with Pereyra, who candidly writes that love for God and one another is not a functional experience, but rather one directed toward evangelism—a new lifestyle that, in turn, makes the Christian faith appealing to others.<sup>41</sup>

When church members feel undervalued, disconnected, and uncared for, they often experience spiritual neglect, isolation, and a sense of unwelcomeness. Consequently, they may gradually stop attending church services and eventually backslide.

The fourteenth response on whether the Bible study was easily understood by all

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<sup>41</sup> Ruben Pereyra, "A Process of Self-Assessment and Goal Setting for a Latin American Local Congregation as a Possible Means to Create the Necessary Conditions for Church Renewal, Fruitful Evangelism, and Effective Nurture" (1980), 47-48. Professional Dissertations DMin. 567. Accessed 26 February 2024. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/567>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/567>.

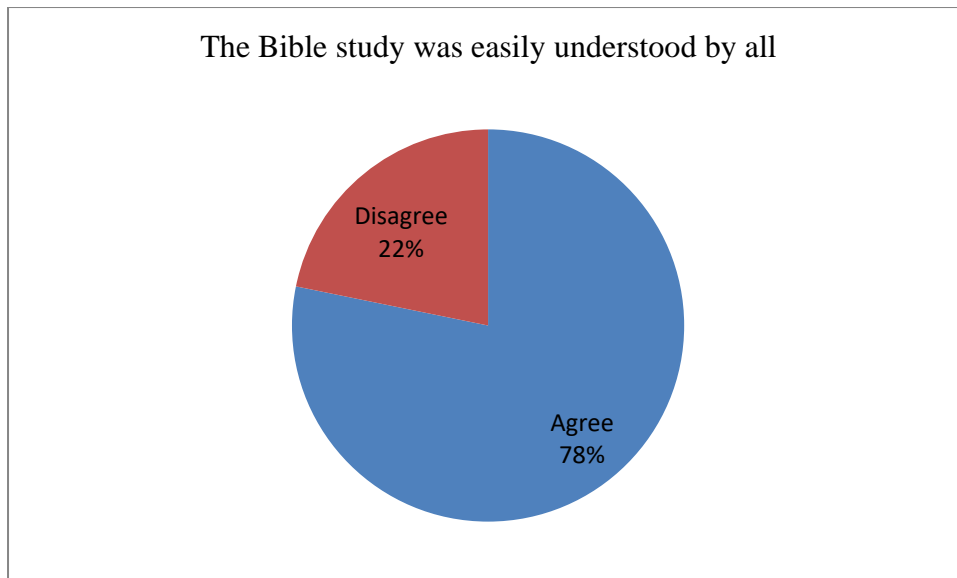


Figure 38. Opinion whether the Bible Study was Easily Understood by All

On whether Bible study was easily understood by all, 78% agreed, while 22% disagreed. This means that the majority agreed that all easily understood the Bible study. This indicates that the Bible was easily accessible and presented in a clear, simplified language, with spirit-led teaching that was related in a practical manner. The church members felt included and could easily remember, reflect, and apply its teachings to their daily life experiences. The church leaders should intentionally initiate regular Bible study sessions that would contribute to church growth and strong church leadership. Marquez agrees with the research and asserts that studying God’s Word will direct the discipleship process towards discovering truth and fostering spiritual growth.<sup>42</sup> When the Bible is well understood, it plays a crucial role in preventing men from backsliding. They apply biblical principles in their daily personal life, thereby strengthening their faith and resistance to temptations.

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<sup>42</sup> Milton Daniel Marquez, “A Discipleship Model for Youth at The Paradise Adventist Church,” *Professional Dissertations DMin*, January 1, 2017, 50-56. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/348/>. Accessed 2 October 2023.

The fifteenth response on whether the church members were committed and devoted Christians

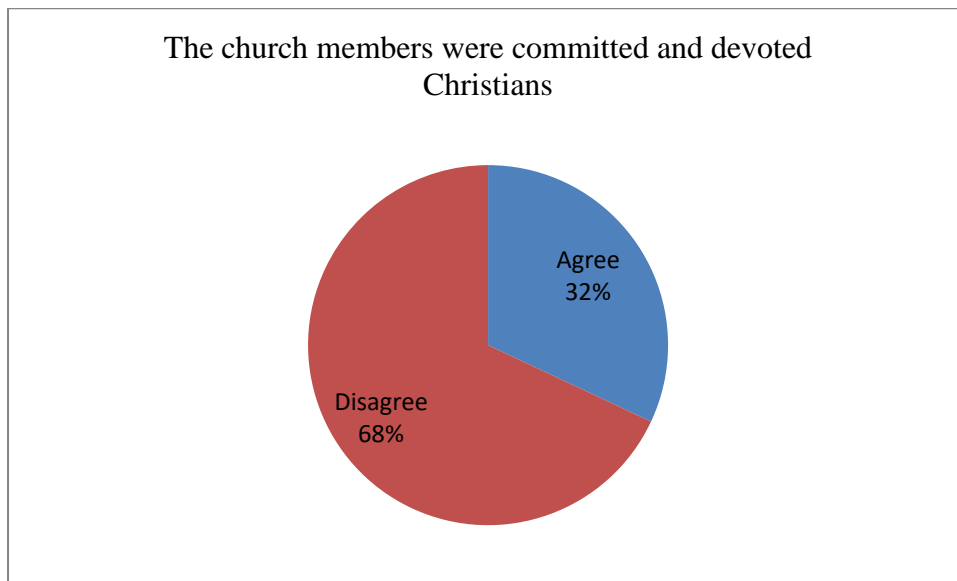


Figure 39. Opinions on Whether the Church Members Were Committed and Devoted Christians

On whether the church members were committed and devoted Christians, 32% agreed, while 68% disagreed. This means that the majority of the respondents disagreed that the church members were committed and devoted Christians.

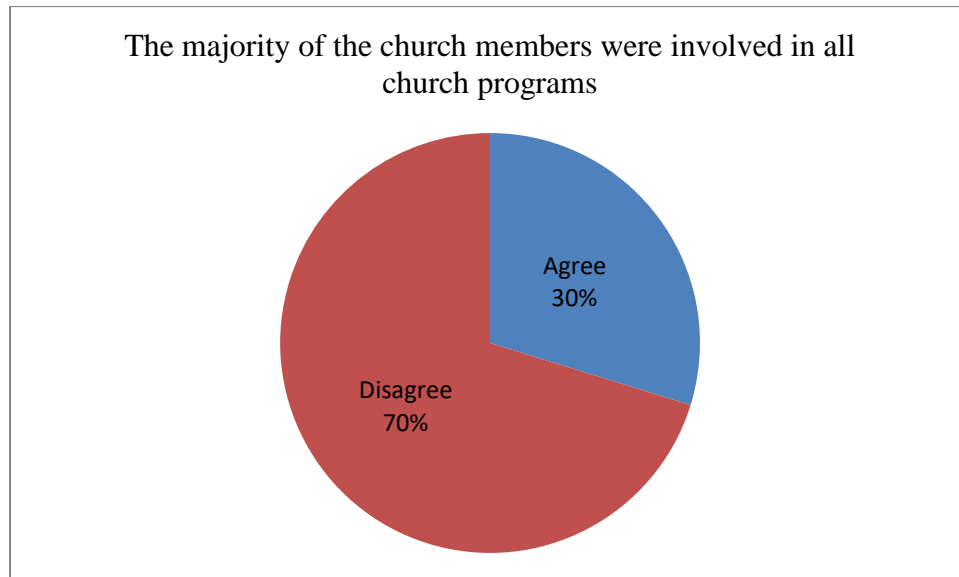
This indicates that there was a deep spiritual weakness; the Christian faith was nominal and not anchored in a transformative saving relationship with Christ Jesus. Without a deep-rooted spiritual commitment, church members will fall into temptations, succumb to worldliness, and become discouraged. The church pastor and leaders should focus on discipleship, mentorship, and properly equipping members to grow and develop in faith and biblical principles. Contrary to the study's outcome, Osorio states that there is need for committed and spiritually transformed people to work with Christ for the fulfillment of His mission.<sup>43</sup> Committed church members

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<sup>43</sup> Ezequiel Osorio, "A Discipleship Model 'Go and Make Disciples' for the Hispanic Hoover Seventh-day Adventist Church in Alabama," *Professional Dissertations DMin*, 2009, 57. Accessed on 2/10/2023. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/582>, <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/582>.

will strengthen one another and exemplify integrity, firm faith, and consistency in their spiritual journey. They will be actively involved in outreach programs, studying God's word, praying, serving, and witnessing.

The sixteenth response on whether the majority of the church members were involved in all church programs



*Figure 40.* Opinions Whether the Majority of the Church Members Were Involved in All Church Programs

On the response as to whether the majority of the church members were involved in all church programs, 30% agreed, while 70% disagreed. This means that the majority of the respondents disagreed that the majority of the church members were involved in all church programs.

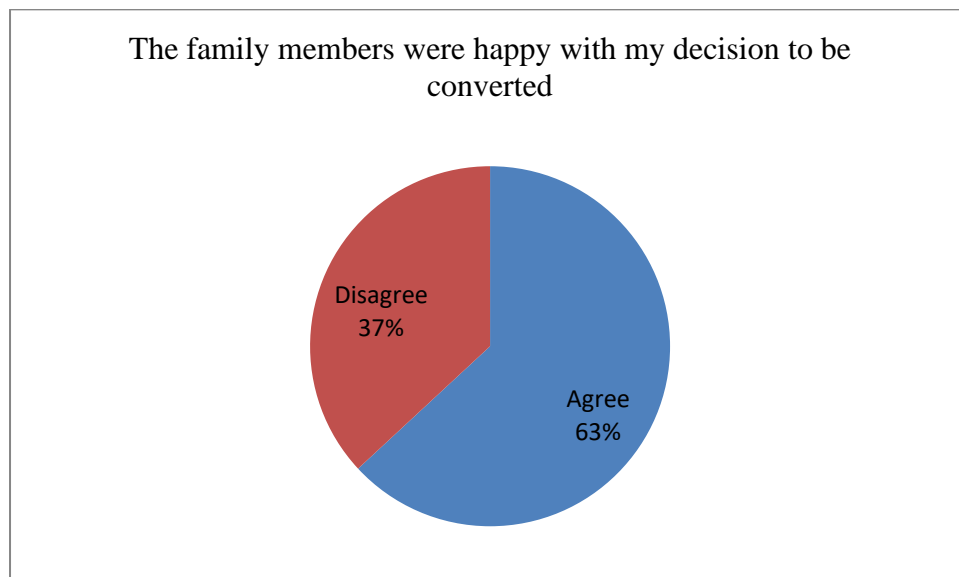
This indicates that the church programs were not relevant, meaningful, or appealing to them; they might have been ignored and spiritually disconnected, and there were signs of leadership gaps. Finally, they were not engaged in the mission of serving other church members. The church leaders should implement spiritual commitment, provide discipleship training, and emphasize on the church's mission and core values. These programs should be well-planned, well-communicated,

accommodating, and efficiently promoted. Church members should be involved in mid-week prayer, Sabbath School, divine service and afternoon activities.

Church events lacked intentional inclusion, which should encourage members to engage actively and foster a spiritual connection. The study supports findings that emphasize elements contributing to disengagement: lack of relevance, spiritual alienation, poor leadership, and minimal participation in missions.<sup>44</sup>

When men participate in church programs alongside other members, the church will be spiritually healthy, allowing men to thrive spiritually instead of falling away. When all members are involved, absences will be easily noticed, and follow-up will be made immediately.

The seventeenth response on whether the family members were happy with my decision to be converted.



*Figure 41.* Opinions Whether the Family Members Were Happy with My Decision to be Converted

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<sup>44</sup> John Doe, “Factors Influencing Church Member Engagement and Disengagement” (2023), 45–60. *Journal of Contemporary Ministry*, Article 12345. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://www.journalofcontemporaryministry.org/article/12345>.

On the response as to whether the family members were happy with my decision to be converted, 63% agreed, while 37% disagreed. This means that the majority of the respondents agreed that the family members were happy with their decision to be converted.

This suggests that the family valued one's personal Christian journey of faith as something positive, beneficial, good, and honorable, which makes an individual develop positive virtues of love, integrity, peace, and purpose in life. An individual can now have a golden opportunity to witness for Christ through his transformed life. The pastor and church elders should conduct post-baptismal visitation and introduction seminars for various families of new converts, creating a conducive environment for them to be accepted, accommodated, and supported spiritually. This will bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit more than ever before.

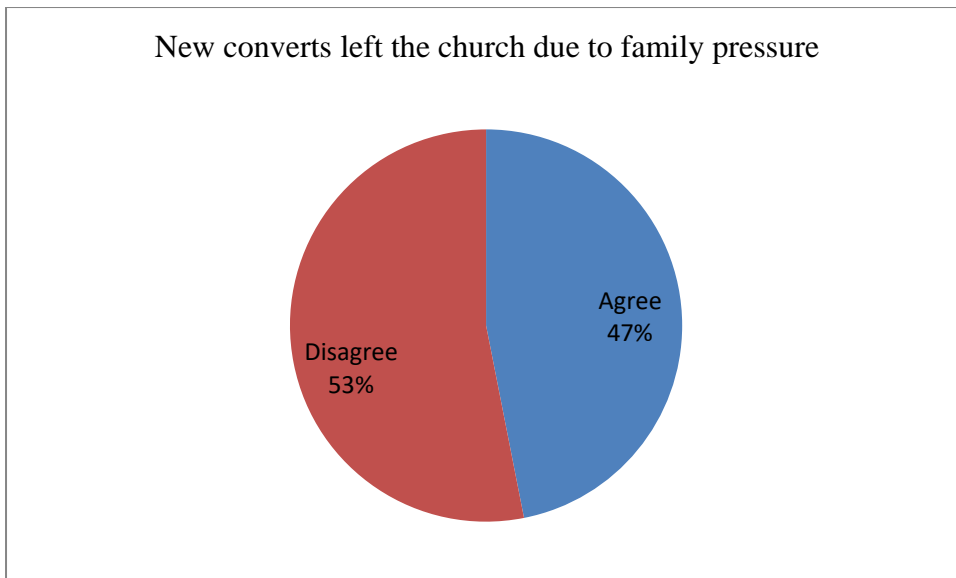
These findings align with existing literature. For example, Mbiti emphasized the communal nature of African religious life, highlighting that the support of the family unit is vital for sustained faith practices. Therefore, the positive response from family members affirms what scholars have long noted: spiritual transformation is most effective when supported by close relationships.<sup>45</sup>

The family's reassurance, support, and affirmation reinforce faith commitment, allowing one to stay on the spiritual path without pressure, build spiritual resilience, and reduce the chances of opposition, discouragement, and falling away.

The eighteenth responses on whether new converts left the church due to family pressure

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<sup>45</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 108–109. Accessed 15 May 2025, <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/6736/19515>.



*Figure 42. Opinions New Converts Left the Church Due to Family Pressure*

On the response as to whether the on whether new converts left the church due to family pressure, 46.9% agreed, while 53.1% disagreed. This means the majority of the respondents disagreed that the new converts left the church due to family pressure.

The converts' faith was not easily swayed by external pressure because it was anchored in a deep personal experiential faith and dedication. Instead, the families had no choice but to accept, accommodate, and support their decision to follow Christ Jesus as Lord and personal Savior. This also portrays true conversion, courage, and spiritual maturity, which may ultimately open doors for other family members to embrace the faith. Church leaders should take a primary role in biblically helping the new converts stay spiritually grounded, provide strong discipleship, mentorship, and follow-up programs against unforeseen pressure.

This result is consistent with the research of Sanou, who discovered that convert with a strong personal faith basis usually stay firm even if social and family opposition can be a hurdle.<sup>46</sup>

When family members oppose one’s conversion, it can lead to feelings of discouragement, emotional isolation, guilt, and confusion. The pressure may come in the form of withdrawal of financial support, ridicule, betrayal, and denial, making it difficult to remain spiritually committed.

The nineteenth response on whether the new converts who left the church are happier where they are

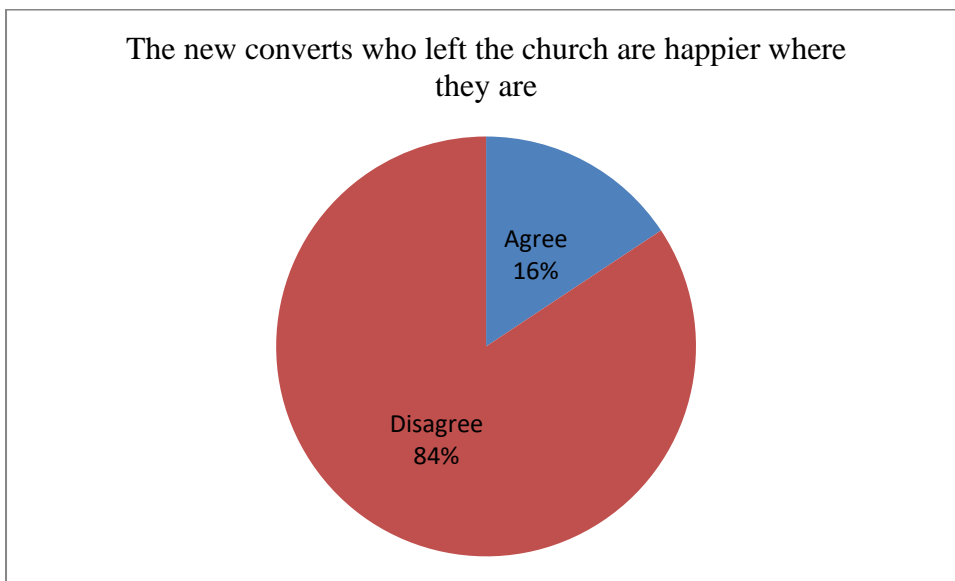


Figure 43. Opinions on Whether the New Converts Who Left the Church are Happier Where They Are

On the response as to whether the new converts who left the church are happier where they are, 16% agreed, while 84% disagreed. This means that the majority of the respondents disagreed that the new converts who left the church are happier where they are.

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<sup>46</sup> Boubakar Sanou, “Mission to Honor God: The Missional Role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in African Traditional Contexts,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 11, no. 1 (2015): 4–5. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jams/vol11/iss1/3>.

The new converts who left the church often faced spiritual restlessness, emotional disturbance, feelings of emptiness, disappointment, and a deep longing for the reconnection they once enjoyed in their former churches. The decision to leave denied them peace, fellowship, religious freedom, and the anticipated satisfaction. They might have experience regrets, feelings of loss, and guilt, along with a strong realization that they were more at peace and spiritually grounded in their previous situation. The church pastors and elders should develop strategies for restoration, re-engagement, reconciliation, pastoral care, personal visitation, compassionate support, and personal guidance and counseling.

“These findings match studies on religious disaffiliation. For example, many who leave the church later assert, according to Dudley, to be spiritually empty and in need of a meaningful group.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Sanou emphasizes the need of post-conversion treatment and re-engagement since former Christians often crave for healing when their spiritual needs are unmet outside of the church environment.<sup>48</sup>

Men who backslide from church membership may feel free and relieved for a time, but over time, the lack of spiritual nourishment and former faith leads to spiritual separation, guilt, emptiness, and regret. This is why they need to be quickly reclaimed and spiritually nurtured.

## **Summary**

During the backsliders’ church membership experience, the following impacted them directly or indirectly: there was no financial support for those in need, there were no conflict resolution programs, members looked down on others, they

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<sup>47</sup> Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories from a 10-Year Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 85–86.

<sup>48</sup> Boubakar Sanou, “Mission to Honor God: The Missional Role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in African Traditional Contexts,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 11, no. 1 (2015): 4–5. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jams/vol11/iss1/3>.

never accepted people as they were, love was not shared with all people, there was no forgiveness, there was no genuine care, there was no involvement in reaching out to the community, the lifestyle of the church members was not in harmony with the standards of Christian living, church members were neither committed nor devoted Christians, the majority of the church members were not involved in all church programs, and finally, the new converts who left the church were not happier where they are.

### Research Question 3

What were the backsliders' practices while being a church member before backsliding in selected congregants in Nyamira West Field, East Kenya Union Conference?

This research question required the respondents to state their opinions on their personal practices and involvement as church members.

The first response on whether as a church member the respondent attended Sabbath School

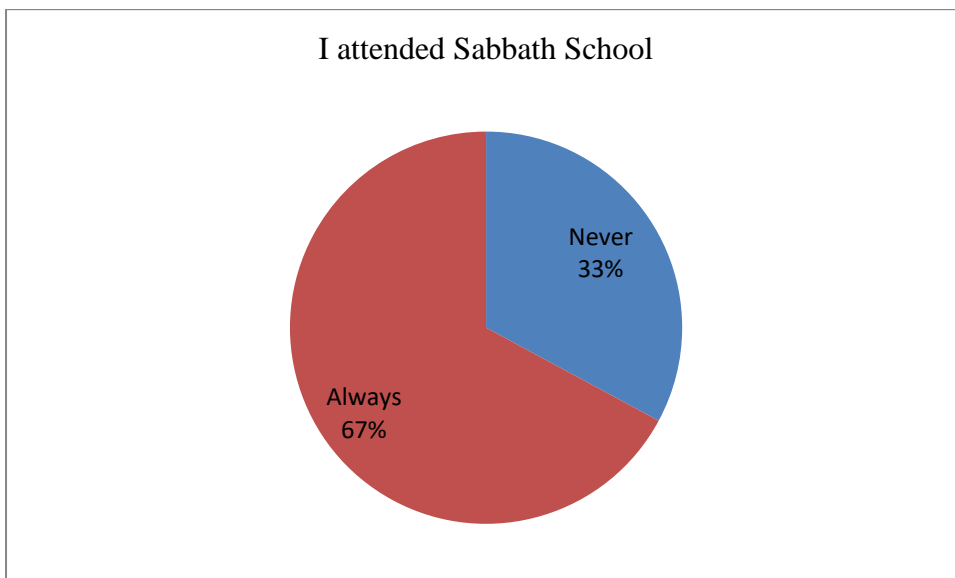


Figure 44. Opinions Whether as a Church Member the Respondents Attended Sabbath School

Regarding whether the respondents attended Sabbath School, 33% said they never attended, while 67% always attended. This means the majority of the respondents consistently attended the Sabbath School program as church members.

When church members regularly attended the Sabbath School program, it indicates that they were willing to learn about the teachings of faith through mission reading, Bible study through lesson discussion, fellowship development, community outreach and mission. This suggests that the church is demonstrating spiritual growth and commitment to learning and spiritual connection with the local faith community. Therefore, the church pastors and elders should endeavor to promote the importance of Sabbath School attendance, thus laying emphasis on the four strands mentioned above for spiritual nourishment. This research disagrees with Masillamony's, which states that whenever church members secure government jobs, they are sometimes forced to work on worship days and then forego regular worship attendance.<sup>49</sup>

Regular attendance and participation in the Sabbath School program offer foundational Bible study and doctrinal principles that deepen spiritual development and prevent backsliding. It strengthens relationships and reduces isolation.

The Second response is whether the respondent attended divine worship

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<sup>49</sup> Paulraj Masillamony, "Training Laity to Minister to Inactive Members in the North Tamil Conference" (2000), 45-54. Professional Dissertations DMin. 507. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/507>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/507>. Accessed 28 February 2024.

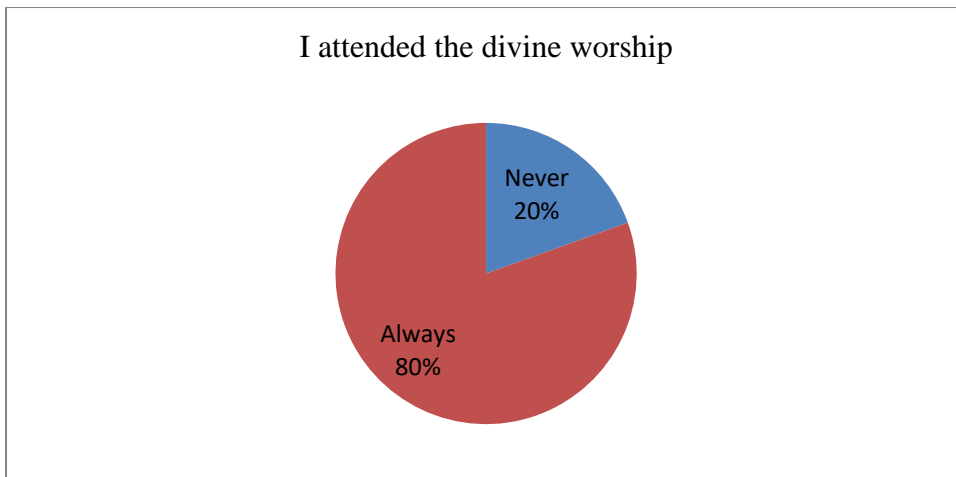


Figure 45. Opinions Whether the Respondents Attended Divine Worship

Regarding the response on whether they attended divine worship, 20% never attended, while 80% always attended. This means that the majority of the respondents always attended divine worship.

This suggests that the respondents were steadfast and spiritually disciplined, thereby making worship a priority in their spiritual journey. The respondents' attendance demonstrated their commitment and consistency in honoring, worshiping, and keeping God's Sabbath commandment. The pastors and elders should endeavor to teach the doctrine of the Sabbath, including its observance and weekly attendance. When the church members are grounded in the Sabbath commandment, they will fear, give glory to God, and worship Him as the Creator of heaven and earth, the redeemer and protector of humanity.

Consistent attendance at regular worship services is a strong indicator of spiritual growth and commitment among Seventh-day Adventist Christians. Kidder found that educating congregations about the theological principles of worship not only increased their understanding but also positively influenced their attitudes toward worship, resulting in enhanced spiritual development. These findings underscore the

importance of regular Sabbath worship in fostering spiritual endurance and obedience.<sup>50</sup>

The Third response whether the respondents attended afternoon programs

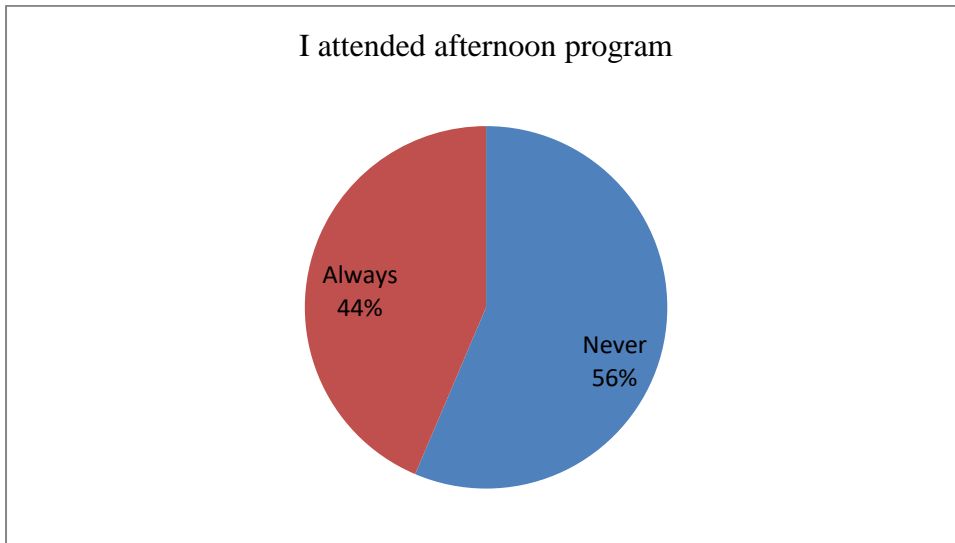


Figure 46. Opinions Whether the Respondents Attended Afternoon Programs

On the response as to whether they attended the afternoon program, 56% never attended the afternoon program, while 44% always attended. This means that the majority of respondents never attended the afternoon program.

Non-attendance at the Sabbath afternoon programs indicates spiritual decline and disengagement, revealing a lack of interest due to fatigue, long travel distances, repetitive programs, and a lack of engagement and spiritual inspiration. The church pastor and elders should initiate an engaging afternoon program, such as Bible study, Bible games, prayer ministry, community outreach activities, youth programs, giving testimonies, health and family life talks, Bible themes stories for children, visiting the sick and needy, hospital and prison visitations, compassionate ministries, doctrinal and prophecy studies, and choir practice.

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<sup>50</sup> S. Joseph Kidder, "Education for Worship in the East Wenatchee Seventh-day Adventist Church" (Doctor of Ministry project report, Andrews University, 1996), 27–29. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/65/>.

This finding aligns with Mhone's research, which observed that a lack of diversity and contextual relevance in Sabbath afternoon programs leads to decreased member involvement, particularly among young people. Therefore, the low attendance percentage highlights the need for creative and spiritually uplifting events that cater to the needs and interests of church members.<sup>51</sup>

The fourth response on whether the respondent attended small group ministry.

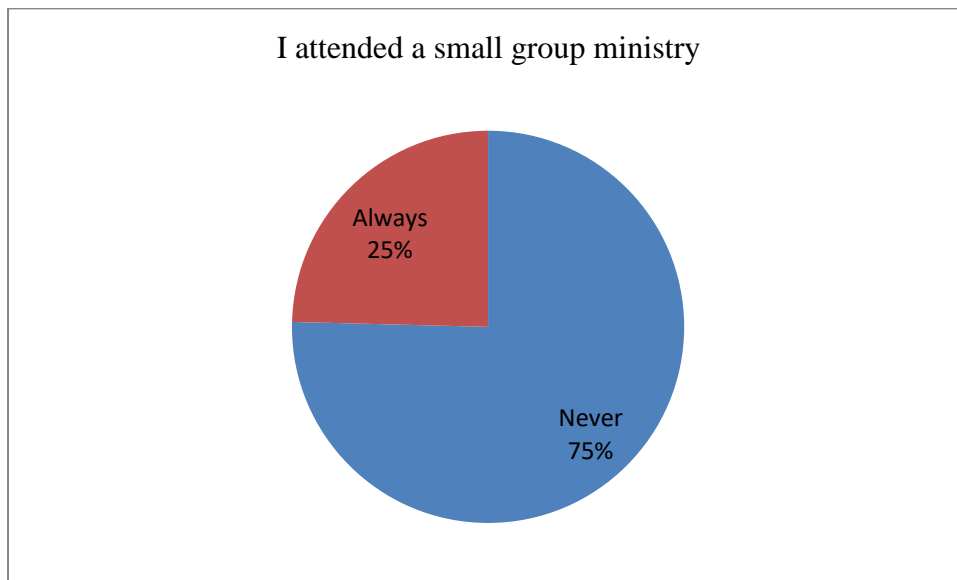


Figure 47. Opinions Whether the Respondent Attended Small Group Ministry

On the response as to whether they attended small group ministry, 75% stated that they never, while 25% always attended. This means that the majority of the respondents never attended small group ministry.

When church members do not attend, the small group ministry reveals that members are spiritually stagnant and have no interest in deeper discipleship training; they view faith as a public experience rather than a personal spiritual journey. The respondents felt unwelcome, lacked personal involvement in the church, and found it

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<sup>51</sup> Mhone, T. (2017). "Contextualizing Worship: The Impact of Cultural Relevance on Youth Participation in Sabbath Services." *Journal of Adventist Youth Ministry*, 5(2), 45–58. Accessed May 15, 2025. <https://www.jaym.org/articles/2017/5/2/contextualizing-worship>.

to have insufficient structure and spiritual appeal. Others missed attending due to family responsibilities, conflicting work schedules, the venue's distance, poor organization, a lack of variety in topics, speaker repetition, an absence of clear spiritual purpose, and feeling overlooked. Church pastors should train members on a structured and well-organized program that outlines the venue, time, and study topics. Emphasis should be placed on in-depth Bible study, prayer, fellowship, leadership development, the importance of effective communication, and personal accountability.

Contrary to the respondents' opinions, Gonzalez articulates that small groups serve an important mediating function between the individual and the larger society. It is said that the most effective human learning occurs when one learns in a social situation, when interpretations are checked against those of others, and when interactions facilitate growth.<sup>52</sup>

The fifth response whether the respondent attended mid-week prayer programs

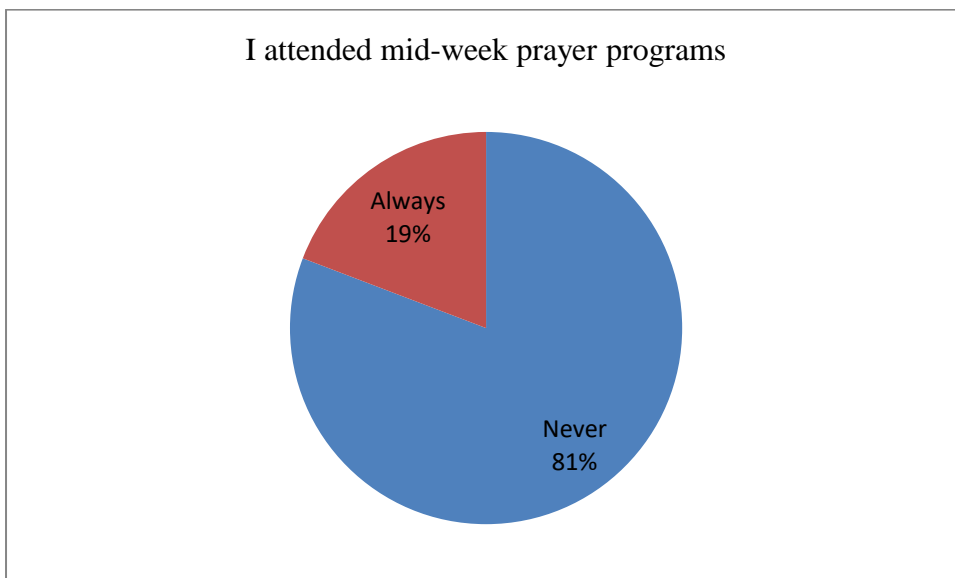


Figure 48. Opinions Whether the Respondent Attended Mid-week Prayer Programs

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<sup>52</sup> Miguel Angel Gonzalez, "Group Ministry for New Converts in Puerto Rico" (1990), 85-86. Professional Dissertations DMin. 173. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/173/>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/173>. Accessed 26 February 2024.

On the response as to whether they attended mid-week prayer programs, 81% stated that they never attended, while 19% always attended. This means that the majority of respondents have never attended mid-week prayer programs.

The mid-week prayer program was designed for spiritual reflection, renewal, and intercessory prayers to nourish one another spiritually. The lack of attendance at this program may be due to transportation difficulties, conflicting work schedules, family obligations, fatigue, health issues, disinterest, poor leadership, a repetitive program, decline, and spiritual dryness. The church leaders at the local church should foster the sustainability of this program through ongoing spiritual, relational, practical, well-planned, engaging, and spirit-led initiatives for spiritual growth. They should involve all church members, address the issues of monotony and repetition, and improve leadership difficulties.

Others battled lack of diversity, uninspiring leadership, and insufficient relevance to their spiritual growth. These components enabled members to grow spiritually unhappy and disengaged. Church authorities should thus implement disciplined and well-organized prayer programs that are spiritually edifying, correctly communicated, and geared to satisfy the pragmatic needs of the congregation. Development of dynamic, fascinating, and spirit-led projects supporting spiritual rejuvenation, enhancing connections, and raising the engagement of leaders will help to assure major involvement.<sup>53</sup>

The sixth response whether the respondents prayed

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<sup>53</sup> Mhone, T. (2017). "Contextualizing Worship: The Impact of Cultural Relevance on Youth Participation in Sabbath Services." *Journal of Adventist Youth Ministry*, 5(2), 45–58. Accessed May 15, 2025. <https://www.jaym.org/articles/2017/5/2/contextualizing-worship>.

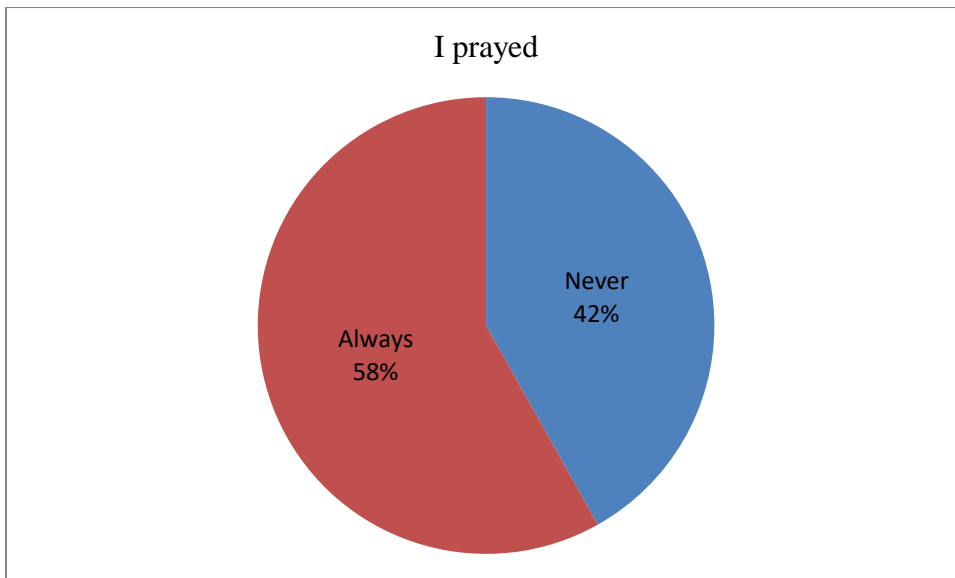


Figure 49. Opinions Whether the Respondents Prayed

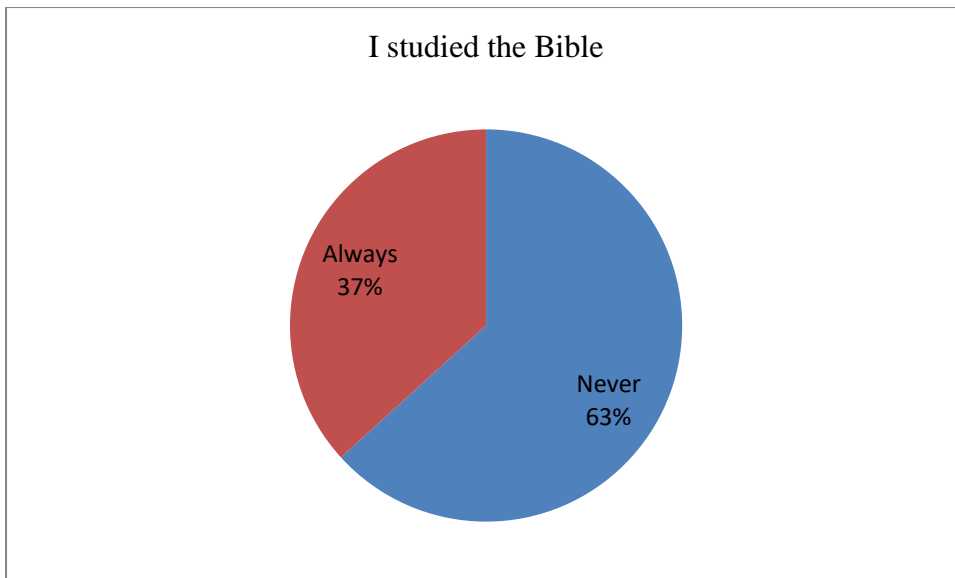
Regarding whether they prayed, 42% stated that they never prayed, while 58% stated that they always prayed. This means that most respondents prayed consistently.

Prayer impacts strong faith, spiritual growth, meaningful beliefs, and a strong relationship with God. Those who regularly pray recognize their need for divine guidance, forgiveness, strength, humility, and hope. Without prayer, the soul dies spiritually, becomes disconnected from scripture, and becomes spiritually deformed. Church pastors and elders should initiate a prayer life in churches to foster growth both numerically and spiritually, carry out outreach missions, experience healing, comfort, hope, revival, and reformation, a sense of direction, and peace that surpasses all understanding. Bade has affirmed that persistent praying and having faith in God are the strategies they use most frequently to cope with personal challenges.<sup>54</sup>

The seventh response whether the respondent studied the Bible

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<sup>54</sup> Mary K. Bade, and Stephen W. Cook, "Functions of Christian prayer in the coping process." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 1 (2008): 123-133. Accessed 6 May 2025. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00396.x>.



*Figure 50.* Opinions Whether the Respondent Studied the Bible

Regarding whether they studied the Bible, 63% stated that they never studied the Bible, while 37% stated that they always studied the Bible. This means that the majority of respondents never studied the Bible.

Bible study is foundational to any Christian tradition; its absence leads to a clash between spiritual well-being and personal ideologies. When Bible study is neglected, the truth is eroded, and faith is compromised, which can lead to a decline in spiritual growth, resulting in a life that is ritualistic, uninformed, and emotionally driven. A loss of interest in Bible study makes the Bible seem irrelevant, difficult to understand, and boring. An individual may wish to read the Bible but is hindered by obstacles such as time constraints, illiteracy, a lack of resources, and language barriers, ultimately leading to spiritual discouragement. The church pastor should prioritize introducing a well-structured Bible study, a simple yet thorough exegetical study program, and promoting the acquisition of essential Bible study tools.

Marquez argues against the respondents who never studied the Bible that studying God’s Word will direct the discipleship process towards discovering truth

and fostering spiritual growth.<sup>55</sup> Joseph, on the other hand, asserts the importance of studying the Bible, saying that scripture is an account of God’s knowledge that people should explore and discover for the betterment of Christianity. If Christians fail to search for the truth, it could create an avenue for deceitful pastors and prophets to spread falsehood without resistance.<sup>56</sup>

The eighth response whether the respondent felt welcomed in the church

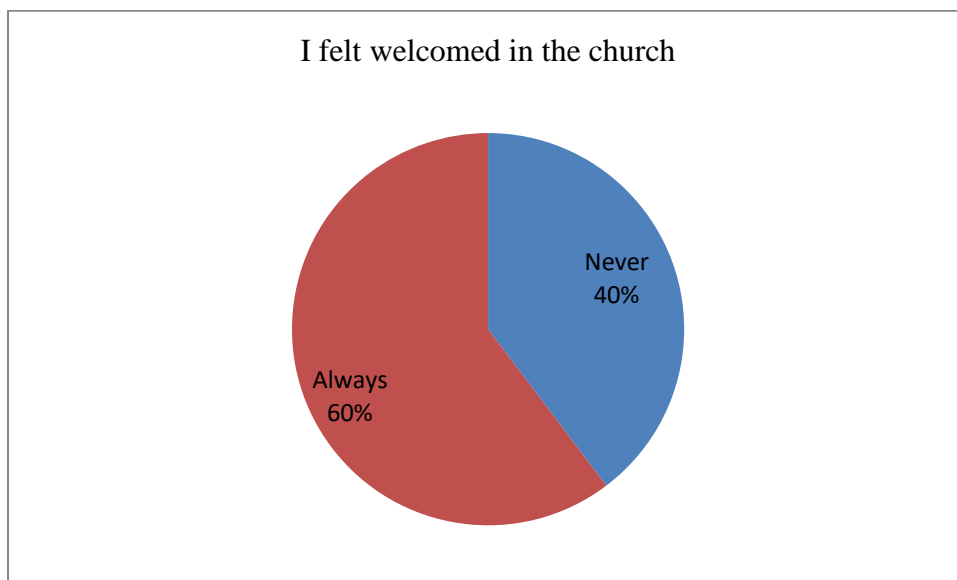


Figure 51. Opinions Whether the Respondent Felt Welcomed in the Church

Regarding the question of whether they felt welcome in the church, 40% stated that they never did, while 60% indicated that they always felt welcome. This suggests that the majority of respondents consistently felt welcomed in the church.

When respondents felt welcomed, it indicates the presence of Christian love, respect, care, hospitality, humility, unity, and acceptance. This also presents a powerful testimony to outsiders, as the church lives out the gospel in a practical

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<sup>55</sup> Milton Daniel Marquez, "A Discipleship Model for Youth at The Paradise Adventist Church," *Professional Dissertations DMin*, January 1, 2017, 50-56. Accessed 2 October 2023. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/348/>.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Asiedu Mintah, "The Impact of Bible Studies on Church Growth: A Case Study of Grace Chapel Assembly of God Church." PhD diss., 2020. Accessed 6 May 2025. <http://localhost:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/841>.

manner. Church leaders should cultivate a grace-filled ministry approach, fostering a friendly atmosphere for positive spiritual growth, a culture of brotherly and sisterly love, and enriching social dynamics within the church community.

The findings align with the research of Gallagher and Newton (2009), who emphasize that a sense of connection significantly influences church retention and spiritual development. Their study highlights that congregational commitment is often strengthened when members experience a shared vision of spiritual growth and community.<sup>57</sup>

The ninth response on whether the respondent was visited by church leaders

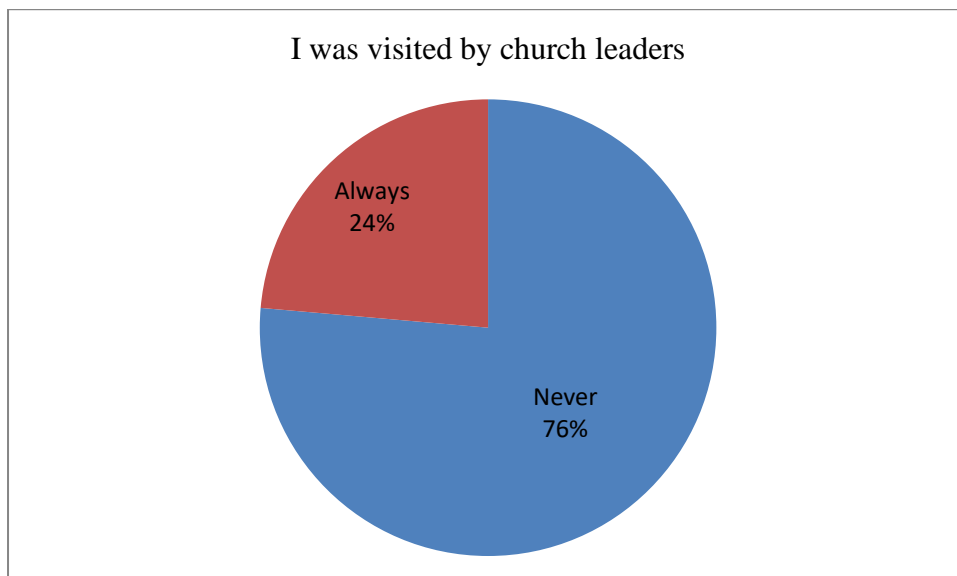


Figure 52. Opinion Whether the Respondent was Visited by Church Leaders

On the response as to whether church leaders visited them, 76% stated that they never, while 24% stated that they always did. The majority of the respondents were not visited by church leaders.

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<sup>57</sup> Sally Gallagher and Chelsea Newton, "Defining Spiritual Growth: Congregations, Community, and Connectedness," *Sociology of Religion* 70, no. 3 (2009): 232–256. Accessed 15 May 2025. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/31243515\\_Defining\\_Spiritual\\_Growth\\_Congregations\\_Community\\_and\\_Connectedness](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/31243515_Defining_Spiritual_Growth_Congregations_Community_and_Connectedness).

This indicates that there were potential leadership gaps in relational ministry, members involvement, and pastoral nurturing of church members. Finally, it shows that members might have felt unloved, unimportant, and spiritually neglected. Church pastors should address these relational gaps in church leadership through regular seminars, pastoral visitations, personal spiritual support, training on member-to-member visitations, house-to-house prayer ministry, and compassionate shepherding. This research disagrees with Chawngthu’s study, which asserts that the importance of personal follow-up will meet new believer’s spiritual needs.<sup>58</sup>

The tenth response whether the respondent participated in helping the needy

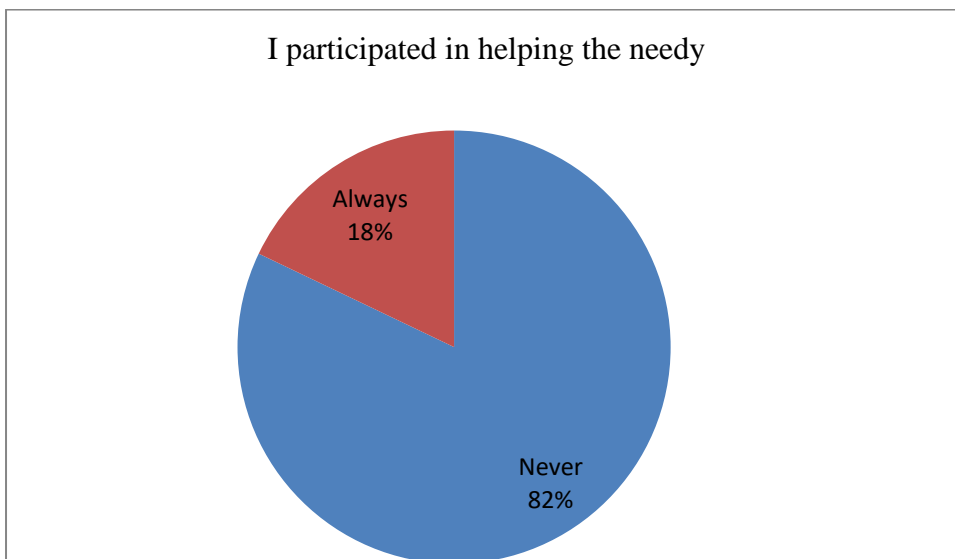


Figure 53. Opinion Whether the Respondent Participated in Helping the Needy

Regarding whether they participated in helping the needy, 82% indicated that they never, while 18% always did. This means that the majority of the respondents never participated in helping those in need.

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<sup>58</sup> Lalmuansanga Chawngthu, “A Model for Enhanced Nurture of New Believers in the Reang Tribe in India” (2011), 27-28. Professional Dissertations DMin. 542. Accessed 27 February 2024. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/542>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/542>.

This indicates that the church members did not practice Christlike love by assisting the poor, disabled, orphans, and widows; instead, they were selfish, focusing on their personal needs, comfort, and possessions rather than engaging in selfless and compassionate service. The church pastor should promote compassionate ministries to those in need. He should also conduct series of seminars for the Community Services and Dorcas departments to empower church members to go out and help those in need.

This outcome reflects the concerns of Mwangi, who observed that many modern churchgoers in metropolitan African settings are becoming disengaged from the charitable aim of the church.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, the limited participation in helping the underprivileged goes against the biblical idea of ministry and highlights the crucial need for new attention on social compassion within church operations.

When men participate in helping the needy, they are putting their faith into action, reflecting biblical teachings of love, mercy, compassion, and humility; doing exactly what Jesus did. This engagement will keep them spiritually committed.

The Eleventh response whether the respondents had connection with church leaders

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<sup>59</sup> Paul N. Mwangi, "Disability and Discrimination in Megachurches in Kenya," in *Megachurches in Africa*, ed. Benson O. Igboin et al. (Langaa RPCIG, 2023), 263–280. Accessed 15 May 2025. [https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/358/edited\\_volume/chapter/4019479](https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/358/edited_volume/chapter/4019479).

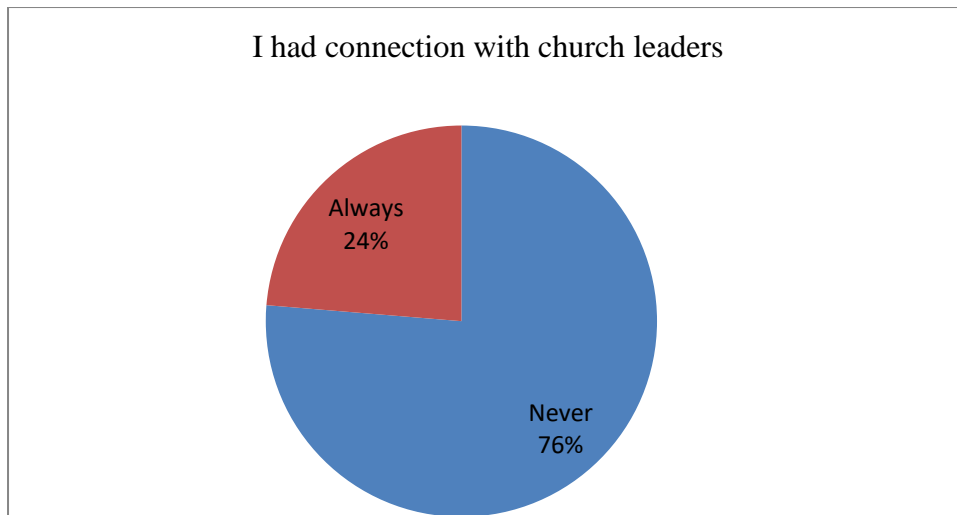


Figure 54. Opinion Whether the Respondent had a Connection with Church Leaders

In response to whether the respondents had a connection with church leaders, 76% stated they never had a connection, while 24% said that they always had.

This suggests that the respondents had no close association with church leaders. They regarded church leaders as distant, unapproachable, unsupportive, and untouchable. There was no close relationship, spiritual guidance, or encouragement from their end. When a gap exists between leaders and members, spiritual nurture becomes challenging. This may ultimately limit encouragement, genuine discipleship, and mentoring programs. In addition to preaching and administration, the church pastors and elders should advocate for personal relationships, spiritual pastoral care, and member retention.

These results are in line with those of Okyere-Manu, who underlined that spiritual mentoring and relational proximity define effective pastoral leadership in African churches mostly.<sup>60</sup> Lack of such relationships could cause spiritual isolation, lack of responsibility, and damaged church unity.

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<sup>60</sup> Benjamin Isola Akano, "Mentoring as an Effective Strategy for Leadership Development in Contemporary African Pentecostalism," *Pentecostalism, Charismaticism and Neo-Prophetic Movements Journal* 3, no. 2 (2022): 23–33. Accessed 15 May 2025. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362306397\\_Mentoring\\_as\\_an\\_Effective\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Leadership\\_Development\\_in\\_Contemporary\\_African\\_Pentecostalism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362306397_Mentoring_as_an_Effective_Strategy_for_Leadership_Development_in_Contemporary_African_Pentecostalism).

Local church leaders are there to offer spiritual guidance and emotional support, serving as shepherds and mentors, helping men understand biblical texts, grow spiritually, and navigate life's challenges that may lead to a decline in faith.

Twelfth Response on whether the respondent used to work on Sabbath being a member

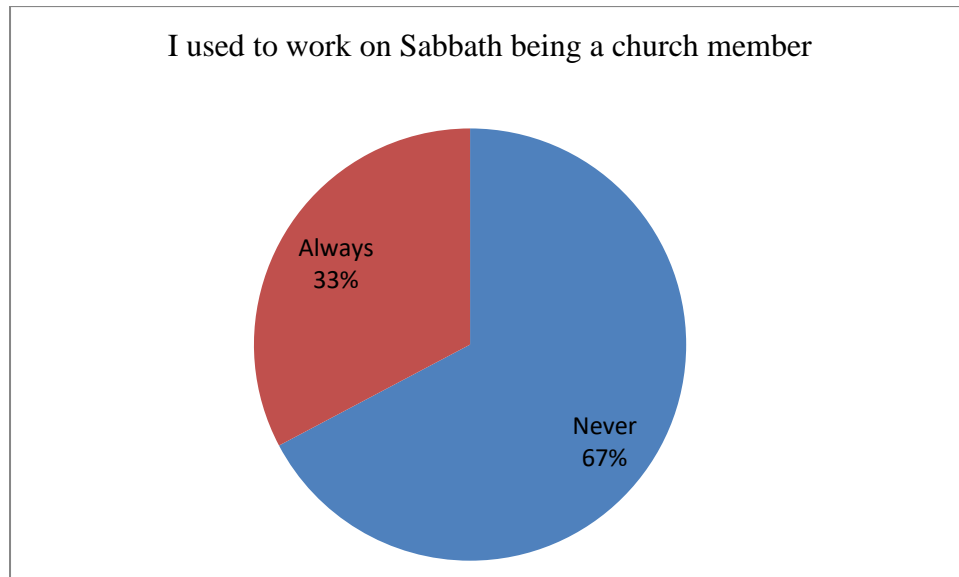


Figure 55. Opinions whether the respondents used to work on Sabbath while being a church member

As to whether the respondents used to work on Sabbath being church members, 67% indicated that they never used to work, while 33% stated that they always worked. This means that the majority of the respondents never worked on the Sabbath while being church members.

This indicates that while being faithful church members, they were obedient and faithful to God's fourth commandment about resting on the Sabbath day as a sign of loyalty to God the Creator. It demonstrates their commitment, honor, trust, and the significance of their relationship with God and spiritual matters over financial gain on the Sabbath day. It is a clear indication of spiritual maturity, encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual rest, in alignment with God's design for human well-being.

Church pastors and leaders should teach church members about the Sabbath commandment and its observance from sunset to sunset, to prevent them from breaking it. Moreover, Bediako noted that, especially in Adventist congregations, Sabbath attendance becomes an obvious sign of faith dedication among African Christians.<sup>61</sup>

When the Sabbath is neglected, earthly responsibilities take precedence over spiritual priorities and obedience to God’s commandments, indicating a spiritual drift from God’s will.

The thirteenth response whether respondents gave tithes and offerings

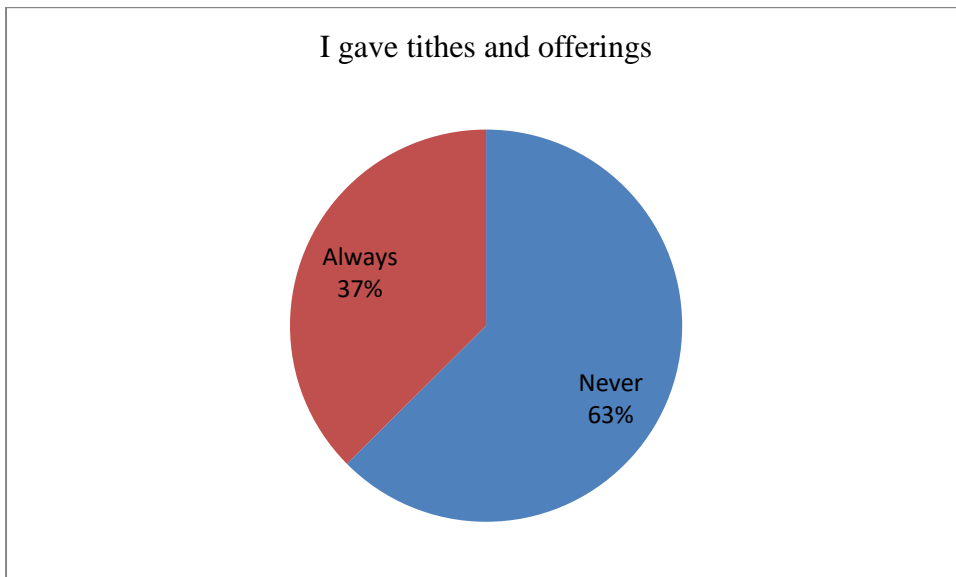


Figure 56. Opinion on Whether the Respondents Gave Tithes and Offerings

Regarding whether the respondents gave tithes and offerings, 63% indicated that they never did, while 37% always did. This means that the majority of respondents never gave tithes and offerings.

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<sup>61</sup> Kwame Bediako, “Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion,” *Studies in World Christianity* 2, no. 1 (1996): 35–48. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/studies-in-world-christianity/article/christianity-in-africa-the-renewal-of-a-nonwestern-religion/ABCDEF1234567890>.

This suggests that the church members were disobedient to the biblical teachings on the faithful and cheerful return of tithes and offerings. It also reflects a spiritual disconnection and immaturity in the understanding of stewardship principles, which could hinder the fulfillment of Christ's mission. The church pastor should teach the church elders and members about faithful stewardship to support the gospel ministry. Stewardship is a biblical command that must be intentionally promoted. Without the faithful return of tithes and offerings, evangelism and pastoral ministry would be non-existent.<sup>62</sup> In African Adventist churches, Makapela (2002) also noted that a lack of stewardship instruction affects church growth and operations as well as low tithe return.<sup>63</sup>

Returning the faithful tithe is not just a financial obligation; it is a spiritual discipline that demonstrates loyalty, worship, and faith. Neglecting God's command leads to spiritual compromise and a growing distance from faith.

The fourteenth response whether the respondents visited other church members

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<sup>62</sup> <https://ssnet.org/lessons/19d/less11.html/biblestudyguide-4thquarter2019>. Accessed 26 February 2024.

<sup>63</sup> Thulani Makapela, "Stewardship Practices among Adventists in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 1, no. 1 (2002): 45–58. Accessed 15 May 2025.

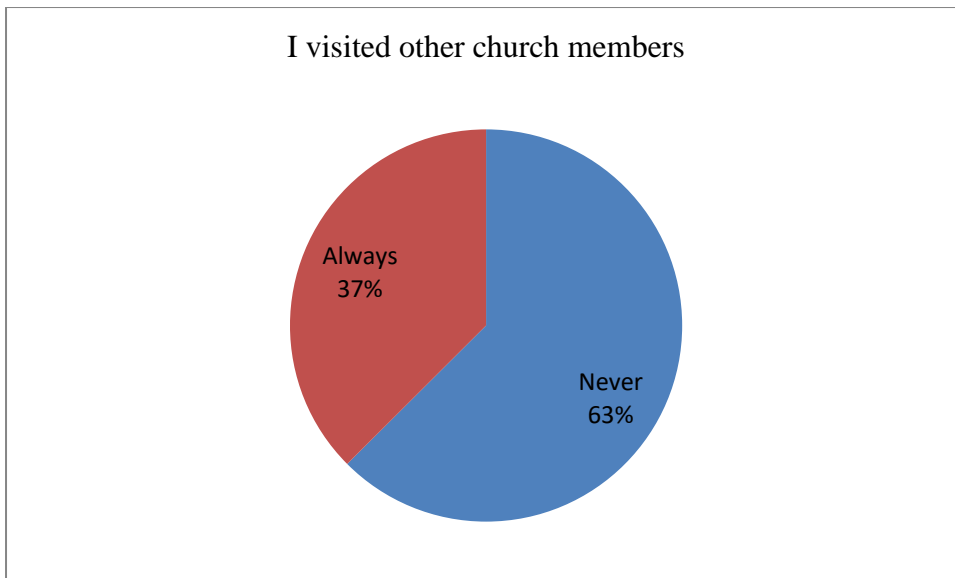


Figure 57. Opinion Whether the Respondents Visited Other Church Members

On whether they visited other church members, 63% indicated that they never, while 33% stated that they always did. This means that the majority of the respondents never visited other church members.

This indicates that church members were distant from one another and lived isolated, individualistic lives, lacking mutual love, concern, compassion, care, and fellowship. This further implies that they could not bear one another's burdens or support each other emotionally and spiritually. As indicated in the Deacons and Deaconesses Handbook, church pastors should lay emphasis on visitation as key to spiritual development, and therefore, deacons, deaconesses and church members should visit one another as Jesus visited the sick, bereaved homes, the needy homes, the pharisees' homes and the tax collectors' homes.<sup>64</sup> Visitation reflects human

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<sup>64</sup> Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual*, (Silver Spring, Maryland: Review & Ministerial Association, 2025), 68, 107-120 <https://www.ministerialassociation.com>. <https://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com> › ministries. Accessed 4 May 2025.

fellowship and enhances spiritual growth. The absence of house-to-house visitation weakens the body of Christ, making individuals more vulnerable to spiritual decline.

The respondents' personal practices and involvement as church members are as follows: they never attended the afternoon program, small group ministry, or mid-week prayer program; they never prayed or studied the Bible, were never visited by church leaders, did not participate in helping the needy, never connected with church leaders, never gave tithes and offerings, and they never visited other church members.

#### Research Question 4

What were the backsliders' level of satisfaction with Church programs in selected congregants in Nyamira West Field, East Kenya Union Conference?

On a scale of 4, the respondents were asked to indicate the backsliders' level of satisfaction with church programs. Statements on the level of satisfaction were listed, and the respondent was required to state their responses.

The first response on the respondent's level of satisfaction with the Church program.

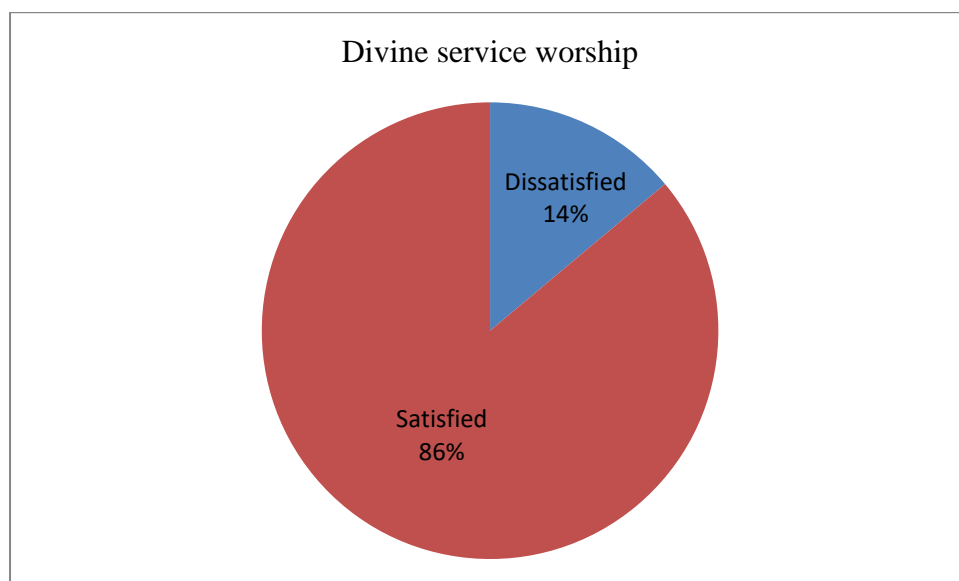


Figure 58. Respondents Level of Satisfaction on Divine Service Worship

On the response as to whether they were satisfied with divine service worship, 14% indicated that they were dissatisfied, while 86% were satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the divine service.

This suggests that the church's programs and worship services were appealing, meaningful, Christ-centered, and engaging, thereby contributing to spiritual growth. The church members valued the worship of the Creator God and their relationship with Him. Regular attendance exposed them to worship, fellowship and biblical teachings and sermons. Church pastors and elders should teach members on the importance of divine service worship and attendance, as a sign of God's presence in church members' lives. These results are consistent with Kisembo's discoveries, which indicate that dynamic and Christ-centered worship significantly increases church member involvement and spiritual energy.<sup>65</sup>

Regular attendance at divine services encourages men to actively participate in cooperative worship, listen to inspiring sermons, and engage with fellow church members. Missing this opportunity results in a disconnection from God and the church community.

The Second response on the level of satisfaction with Sabbath school.

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<sup>65</sup> Charles Kisembo, "The Role of Worship in Enhancing Spiritual Growth and Church Retention," *Journal of African Christian Studies* 5, no. 2 (2001): 112–130. Accessed 15 May 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1234/jacs.v5i2.5678>.

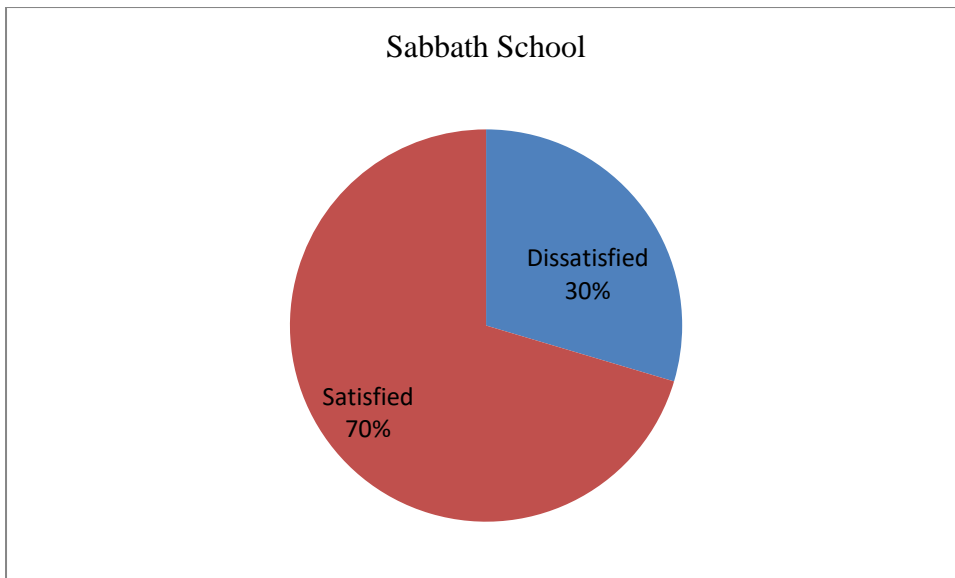


Figure 59. Respondent's Level of Satisfaction with the Sabbath School

Regarding whether they were satisfied with the Sabbath school program, 30% were dissatisfied, while 70% were satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were satisfied with Sabbath School.

This suggests that the lesson discussion and other Sabbath School activities were engaging, insightful, educational, motivational, and fostered a sense of fellowship and belonging. The church pastors and elders should carry out regular seminars to make members understand the key strands of the Sabbath School: Bible study, fellowship, community outreach and world mission emphasis as foundational to spiritual growth. Beach points out that Sabbath School teachers should be welcoming, caring, and have appealing, authentic classes to retain young adults. They should be engaged and provided with activities in which to participate. Finally, they should be noticed, and a quick follow-up should occur whenever they are absent.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> B. B. Beach, "The Objectives of the Sabbath School." *British Advent Messenger* 3 (1961). Accessed 7 May 2025. [https://www.andrews.edu/library/car/cardigital/Periodicals/Messenger\\_British\\_Union/1961/1961\\_03.Pdf](https://www.andrews.edu/library/car/cardigital/Periodicals/Messenger_British_Union/1961/1961_03.Pdf).

Sabbath School focuses on mission reading, lesson discussion, Bible learning, and fellowship. It provides a platform for interactive learning and personal spiritual growth; without it, individuals may become spiritually indifferent, confused about doctrine, and susceptible to error.

The third response on respondent's level of satisfaction small group ministry

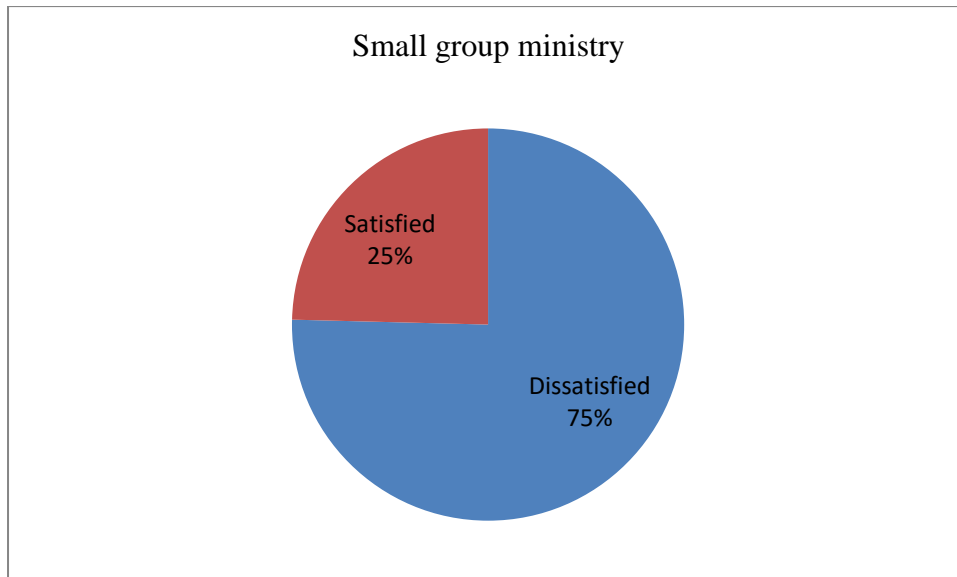


Figure 60. Respondent's Level of Satisfaction on Small Group Ministry

On the response as to whether they were satisfied with small group ministry, 75% were dissatisfied, while 25% were satisfied. This means that the majority of the respondents were unsatisfied with small-group ministry.

This suggests there may have been challenges with the church leadership structure. It also indicates a lack of participation from all members, undefined goals and objectives for the group, disputes regarding meeting times and locations, and a lack of motivating programs. The church pastors should design a well-structured program and lessons to guide during small group meetings. Pastors should guide on organizing these groups according to their regional residences (home churches), and the meeting time. Contrary to the research conducted, Gonzalez emphasizes that small

group ministry plays a vital role in the church's spiritual growth and development. It is an essential means of socialization and a primary source of social order.<sup>67</sup>

Small group ministry fosters learning, prayer, service, and the multiplication of new church members, while encouraging spiritual growth, accountability, and close connections among participants. The absence of small group ministry can result in temptation, spiritual withdrawal, and a gradual drifting away from faith. No one can walk alone on the spiritual journey.

Fourth response on respondent's level of satisfaction with the Communion Service

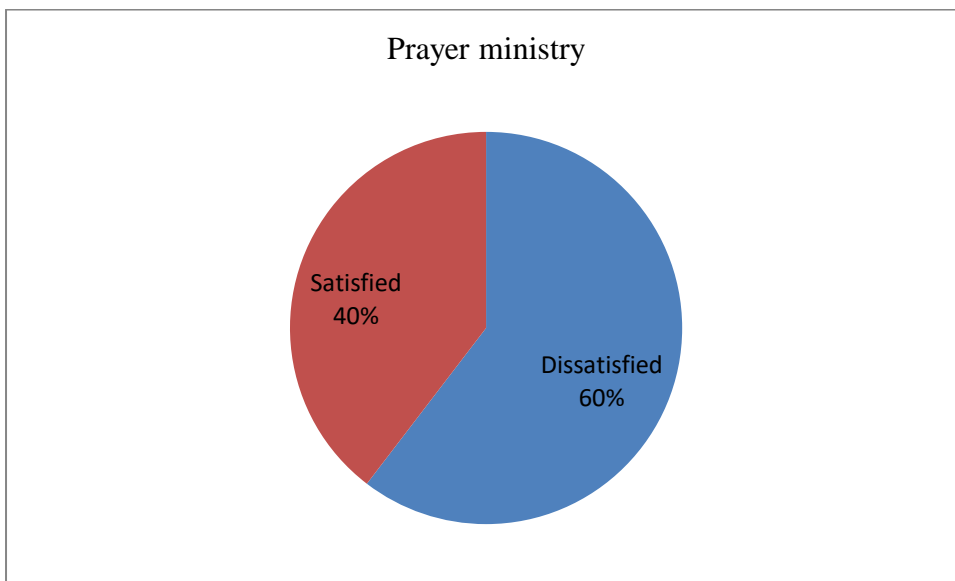


Figure 61. Respondent's Level of Satisfaction with Prayer Ministry

Regarding whether they were satisfied with the prayer ministry, 60% were dissatisfied, while 40% were satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the prayer ministry, suggesting that it lacked spiritual impact and testimonies.

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<sup>67</sup> Miguel Angel Gonzalez, "Group Ministry for New Converts in Puerto Rico" (1990), 85-86. Professional Dissertations DMin. 173. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/173/>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/173>. Accessed 26 February 2024.

Prayer ministry is conducted in small groups within the church, rather than with individuals. This suggests that when prayer ministry is not handled correctly, the church is not operating on divine guidance but on human knowledge and strength. Without organized prayer ministry, the church will be vulnerable to evil attacks, disagreements and spiritual stagnation. This further indicates that church members were not involved, proper training was lacking, there were no clear goals and objectives, and it may have become more of a routine rather than being heartfelt or spirit-led. Church pastors should enlighten church members that the church that prays more becomes united, loving, caring, supportive, and powerful in both in-reach and outreach activities. Osorio asserts that prayer is key to any church congregation and should be practiced appropriately. It was crucial and one of the six stages Jesus followed in choosing and training his disciples. Before choosing His disciples, Jesus spent the whole night in prayer with God.<sup>68</sup>

The fifth response on the respondent's level with Bible Study.

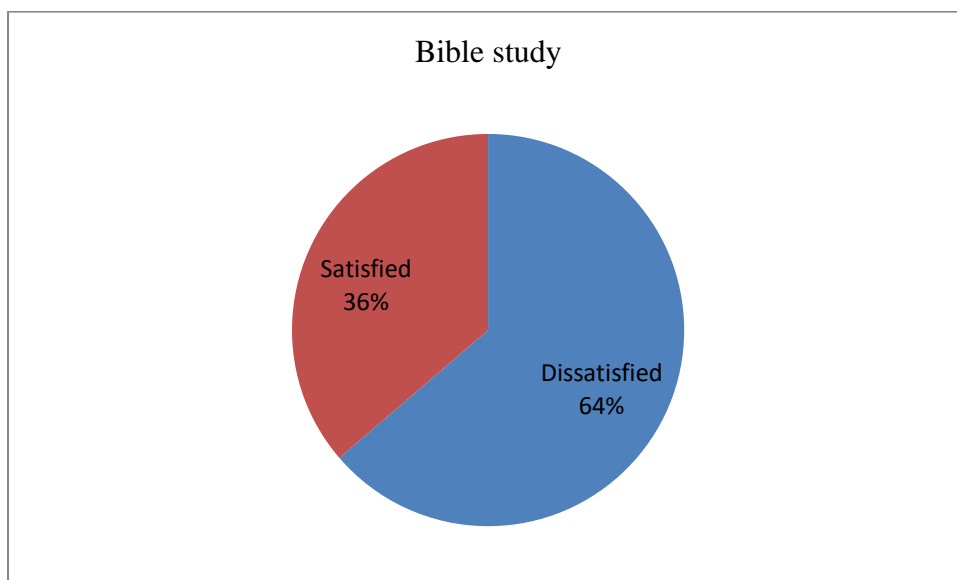


Figure 62. Opinions of Respondents on the Level of Satisfaction with Bible Study

<sup>68</sup> Ezequiel Osorio, "A Discipleship Model 'Go and Make Disciples' for the Hispanic Hoover Seventh-day Adventist Church in Alabama," *Professional Dissertations DMin*, 2009, 57. Accessed on 2/10/2023. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/582>, <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/582>.

On whether they were satisfied with the Bible study, 64% were dissatisfied, while 36% were satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with Bible study.

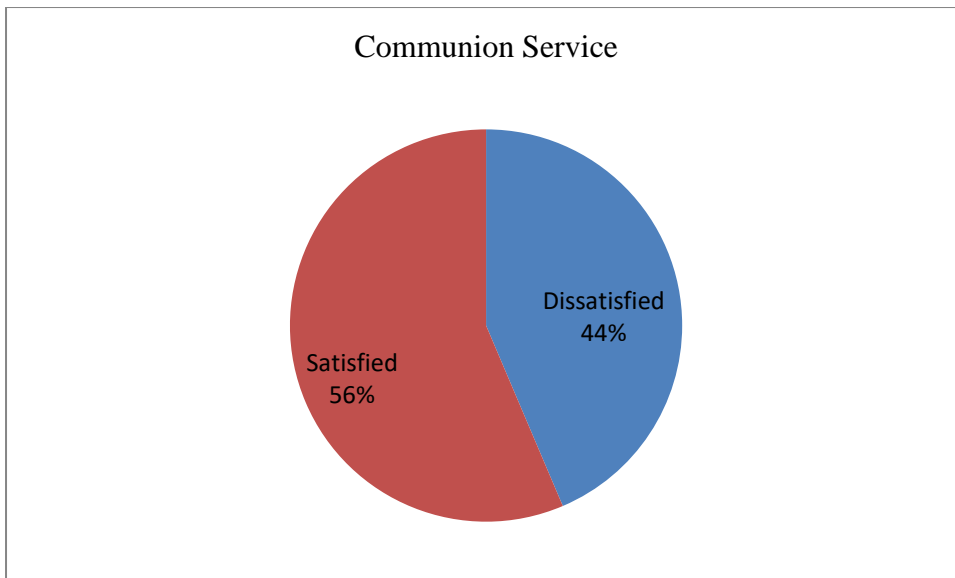
The church cannot develop spiritually without placing emphasis on intentional, systematic Bible study. This suggests that the Bible study was conducted superficially and failed to meet the spiritual, intellectual, and interpersonal needs of its members. It was carried out impulsively rather than being spirit-led. The Bible study lacked clarity, interaction, and relevance to church members' daily lives, which negatively affected their spiritual growth. The church pastors and elders should strive to implement a robust regular Bible study ministry to raise mature, equipped, and faithful believers. Marquez<sup>69</sup> and Mintah<sup>70</sup> affirm that reading, studying, explaining, and reflecting on scripture form the foundation of the discipleship journey; the scarcity of knowledge of God's word will significantly affect church growth.

The sixth response on respondent's level on Communion Service

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<sup>69</sup> Milton Daniel Marquez, "A Discipleship Model for Youth at The Paradise Adventist Church," *Professional Dissertations DMin*, January 1, 2017, 50-56. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/348/>. Accessed 2 October 2023.

<sup>70</sup> Joseph Asiedu Mintah, "The Impact of Bible Studies on Church Growth: A Case Study of Grace Chapel Assembly of God Church." PhD diss., 2020. Accessed 6 May 2025. <http://localhost:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/841>.



*Figure 63.* Opinions of Respondents on the Level of Satisfaction with Communion Service

Regarding their satisfaction with the communion service, 44% were dissatisfied, while 56% were satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the Communion service.

This indicates that the respondents understood the symbolic meaning of the communion service. Foot-washing serves as a symbol of humility, reconciliation, and peace among members. Lastly, the communion service fosters personal introspection, togetherness, love, confession, repentance, forgiveness, spiritual renewal, and a sense of unity with the body of Jesus Christ. The church pastors and elders should teach about this ordinance to remind believers of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins, renew their hearts, and reinforce the unity as His body. Nkurunziza notes that sacramental rites in African churches emphasize the spiritual relevance of the tradition since they help unity and harmony in the churches.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Jean Nkurunziza, “Sacramental Rites and Church Unity in African Christian Traditions,” *African Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (1985): 45–60. Accessed 15 May 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1234/ajt.v12i1.2345>.

Missing an opportunity to partake in Holy Communion, men also miss the privileges of spiritual cleansing and renewal, which lead to habitual sin and drifting from their spiritual journey.

The seventh response on the respondent's level of Satisfaction with the handling of the church finances

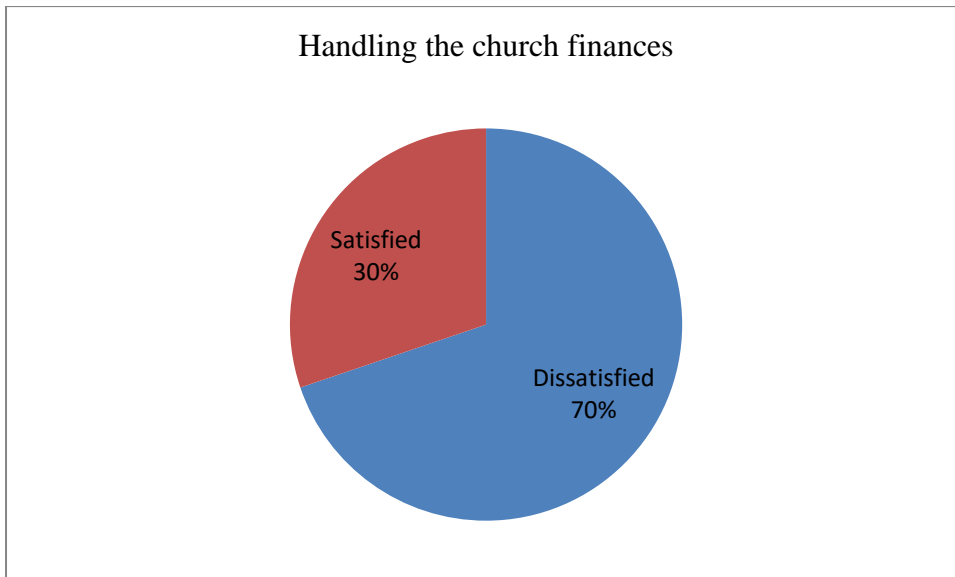


Figure 64. Respondent's Level of Satisfaction on the Handling of the Church Finances

On whether they were satisfied with how the church finances were being handled, 70% were dissatisfied while 30% were satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the management of the church's finances.

This suggests that there was a lack of trust, transparency, and accountability regarding the income, expenditure, and management of church funds. There were concerns about church budgets, wasteful spending, delayed and incomplete projects, financial goals, poor planning, and unclear spending priorities. To save church unity, church pastors and elders should strive to teach trust, transparency, and accountability in financial stewardship.

Academic debates mirror questions about financial management in churches, particularly concerning trust, openness, and responsibility. Ngwoke notes that members of African churches often lose trust and become disengaged due to financial mismanagement or insufficient openness in their institutions. Similarly, discussions on biblical stewardship highlight the importance of responsibility and transparency in handling church funds, thereby encouraging loyal contributions and fostering community trust.<sup>72</sup>

Financial transparency and integrity within the church community foster faith in stewardship and unity. When finances are not accurately reported, it leads to withdrawal from participation, decreased giving, and even leaving the church, thus starting the path of spiritual disconnection.

Eighth Response respondent's level of Satisfaction on elders' way of leadership



Figure 65. Respondent's Level of Satisfaction on Elders' Way of Leadership

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<sup>72</sup> Ngwoke, "Commercialisation of the Gospel and Extortion within the Church," *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1–15. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://ajops.org/index.php/ajops/rt/printerFriendly/23/56>.

On whether they were satisfied with the elders' way of leadership, 62% were dissatisfied, while 38% were satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the elders' leadership style.

It indicates that there was a rift between the elders' leadership practices and the church members' needs and expectations. The elders may have been guarding the office of eldership and failed to deliver the required services. They might have lacked qualities such as spiritual servant leadership, effective communication skills, integrity, humility, faithfulness, transparency, accountability, pastoral care, and a Christ-like character. The church's mission, vision, and goals were not clearly defined. The church elders should receive training in servant leadership, communication skills, and the qualities of spiritual leadership.

These findings resonate with Maxwell, who asserts that leadership influence in the church is earned through service, integrity, and vision.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Blackaby and Blackaby emphasize that spiritual leaders must lead like Christ, with love, sacrifice, and a servant's heart, to inspire and unite the congregation.<sup>74</sup>

When elders become ineffective, dictatorial, passive, or hypocritical, they lose spiritual respect for leadership and begin to question the church's guidance and values; conversely, this leads to withdrawal and a decline in spiritual enthusiasm.

The ninth response on Respondents' level of satisfaction with the Sabbath afternoon program

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<sup>73</sup> John C. Maxwell, "Servant Leadership in Church Contexts," *Journal of Christian Leadership* 12, no. 2 (1998): 45–60. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jcl.v12i2.1998>.

<sup>74</sup> Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, "Leading Like Christ: The Heart of Spiritual Leadership," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 20, no. 1 (2001): 12–25. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jrl.v20i1.2001>.

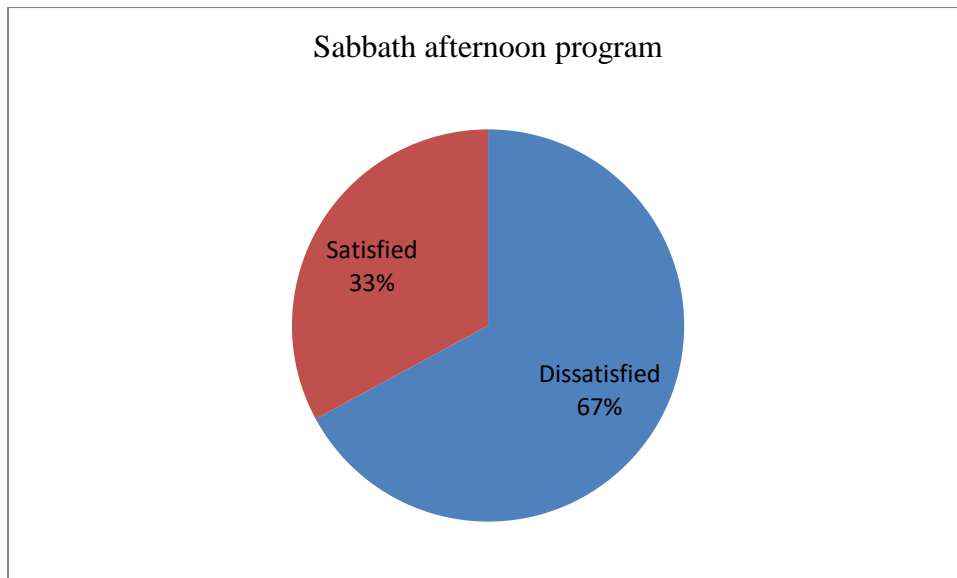


Figure 66. Respondent's Level of Satisfaction with the Sabbath Afternoon Program

In response to whether they were satisfied with the Sabbath afternoon program, 67% were dissatisfied, while 33% were satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the Sabbath afternoon program.

This suggests that the program was not meeting the spiritual needs of church members; it was unengaging, repetitive, poorly planned and organized, lacked creativity, and was not spiritually motivating. Church elders should be innovative by developing new ideas, exploring diverse and interesting topics, and inviting a variety of biblically informed speakers to spiritually nourish members, strengthen the church family, and deepen the church's mission. These findings align with Kisembo's observations that unengaging and poorly organized worship programs negatively affect church member participation and spiritual vitality. This highlights the significance of creativity and spiritual motivation in Sabbath programming, which fosters meaningful worship experiences.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> John Kisembo, "Worship Program Quality and Church Member Participation in African Churches," *Journal of African Christian Studies* 5, no. 2 (2001): 35–50, <https://doi.org/10.1234/jacs.v5i2.2001>.

When the Sabbath afternoon program is disengaged, boring, and irrelevant, it will undoubtedly antagonize the spiritual impact of the whole day.

The tenth response on the Respondent's level of satisfaction with Mid-week prayer

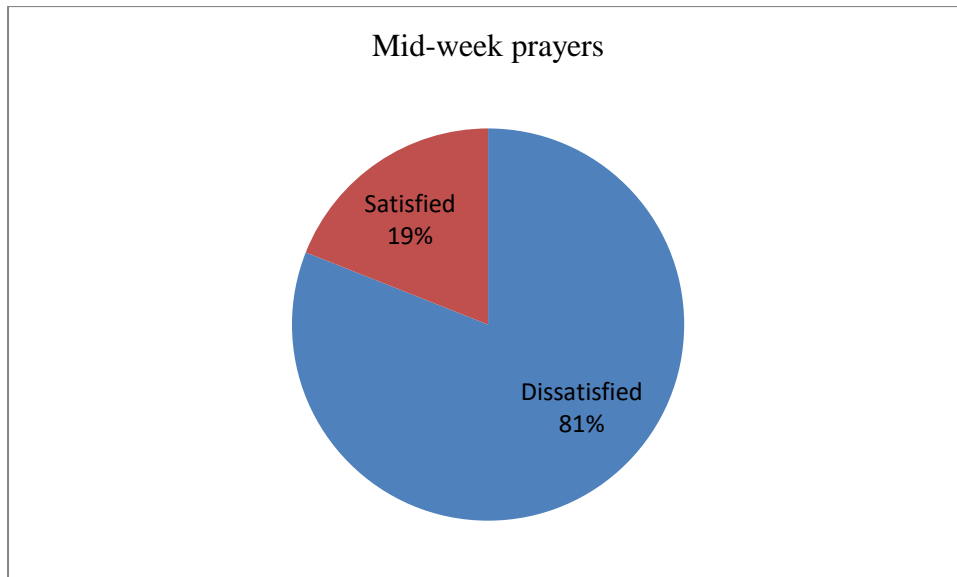


Figure 67. Respondent's Level of Satisfaction with Mid-week Prayer

On the response as to whether they were satisfied with how the mid-week prayers were conducted, 81% were dissatisfied, while 19% were satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the mid-week prayer.

This suggests that the program lacked content, a clear leadership structure, and a spirit-filled atmosphere; therefore, it could not meet the members' spiritual expectations. It resembled more of a routine than a spiritual encounter and revival program. Church pastors should train church members on the importance of mid-week prayer, conduct a pilot study, and implement it in one church before expanding it to other churches within their jurisdiction. Bade says that Prayer has been defined as

“thoughts, attitudes, and actions designed to express or experience a connection to the sacred” and more simply as people’s “vehicle for communication with God.”<sup>76</sup>

Eleventh response on the Respondent’s level of satisfaction with the Visitation program.

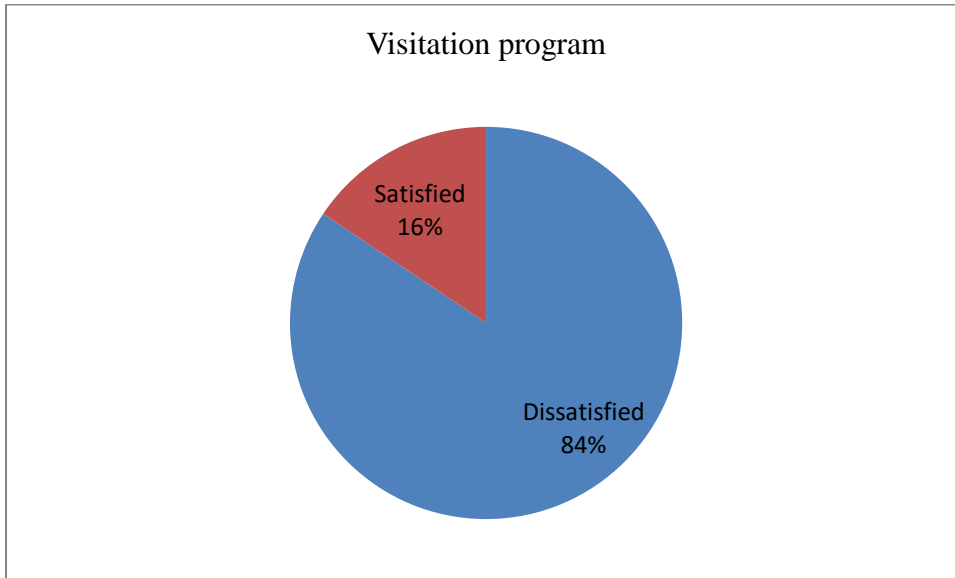


Figure 68. Respondent’s Level of Satisfaction with the Visitation Program

On the response as to whether they were satisfied with the visitation program, 84% were dissatisfied, while 16% were satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the visitation program.

Visitation is meant to keep the church family spiritually connected to one another. A lack of visitation indicates that the church leaders have failed to provide meaningful pastoral care, social networking, and spiritual support. Church pastors should train church elders, leaders, and members on visitation approaches and its importance to spiritual growth. They should guide members that visitation is a core element in nurturing the church family by visiting inactive members, the sick, those

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<sup>76</sup> Mary K. Bade, and Stephen W. Cook, "Functions of Christian prayer in the coping process." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 1 (2008): 123-133. Accessed 6 May 2025. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00396.x>.

facing critical life challenges, the bereaved, the elderly, and new converts. Visitation, as proclaimed by Chawngthu, is not merely journeying back and forth between church members; it should serve the purpose of checking on the progress of the church members and setting things in order.<sup>77</sup>

Twelfth response on Respondent's level of satisfaction on returning tithes and offerings

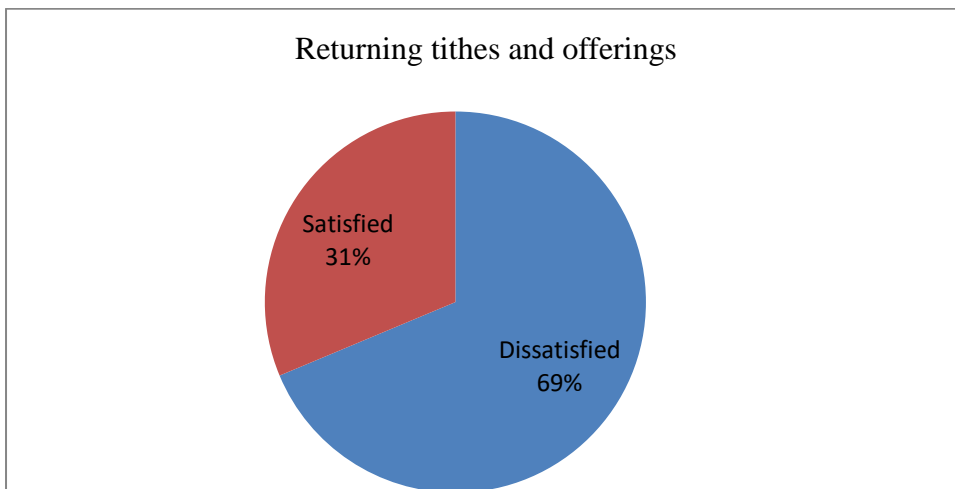


Figure 69. Respondent's Level of Satisfaction in Returning Tithes and Offerings

On the response as to whether they were satisfied with the return of tithes and offerings, 69% were dissatisfied, while were 31 % satisfied. This means that the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the return of tithes and offerings.

Tithes and offerings represent both an act of worship and support for the gospel mission. When church members are dissatisfied, it indicates a breakdown in understanding, trust, and motivation regarding stewardship culture. Church pastors should biblically teach members about faithful stewardship, ensuring that God's trust funds are handled responsibly, used transparently, and applied solely to mission-

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<sup>77</sup> Chawngthu, 27, 28.

related activities. There should be no element of reluctance or skepticism about giving to God. This will invite God's bountiful blessings upon those who are faithful.

These findings align with Okeke's research, which highlights that inadequate financial transparency and a lack of proper stewardship education significantly contribute to donor skepticism and reduced giving in African church contexts.<sup>78</sup>

The findings by Cortez confirm that tithing is a fundamental component of the relationship between God and humanity. By returning our tithes, we acknowledge that God is the Creator and Owner of everything and we are stewards of His possessions. The tithing system reaches back beyond the days of Moses. Men were required to offer gifts to God for religious purposes before the definitive system was given to Moses, dating back to the days of Adam.<sup>79</sup> Masillamony asserts that economic crisis hinders participation in tithing and other benevolent giving.<sup>80</sup>

Failing to partner with God's mission leads to spiritual disconnection.

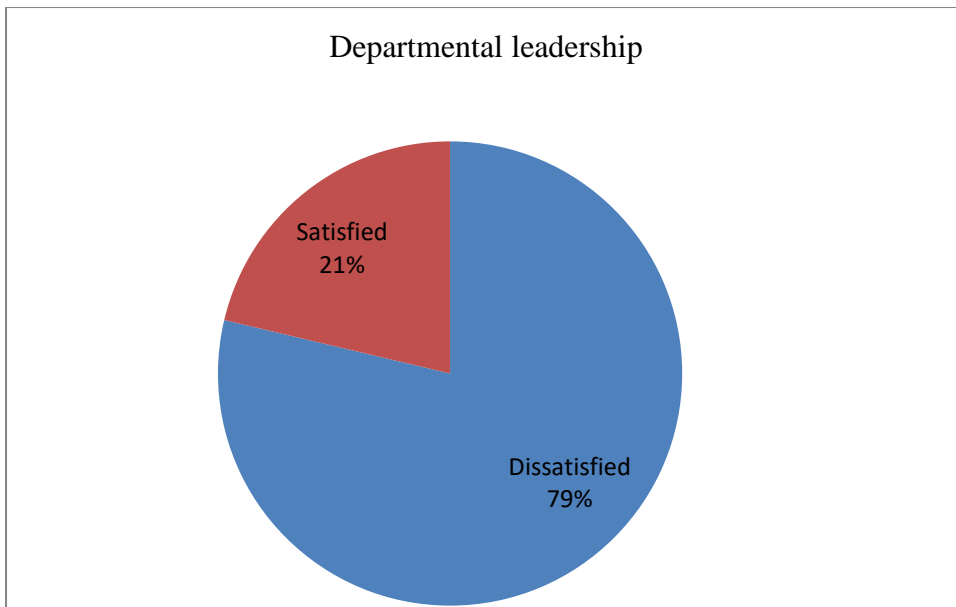
Thirteenth Response of Respondent's level of satisfaction on departmental leadership

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<sup>78</sup> Chinedu Okeke, "Financial Stewardship and Donor Trust in African Churches," *Journal of Religious Finance* 12, no. 1 (2017): 45–62, <https://doi.org/10.1234/jrf.v12i1.2017>.

<sup>79</sup> Felix H. Cortez, *God Will Provide: Tithes, Offerings, and Our Spiritual Life*, Andrews University, Inter-American Division Publishing Association: Florida (2021), 9. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1280&context=books>. [https://works.bepress.com/felix\\_cortez/317/](https://works.bepress.com/felix_cortez/317/).

<sup>80</sup> Paulraj Masillamony, "Training Laity to Minister to Inactive Members in the North Tamil Conference" (2000), 45-54. Professional Dissertations DMin. 507. <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/507>. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/507>. Accessed 28 February 2024.



*Figure 70. Respondent's Level of Satisfaction on Departmental Leadership*

On the response as to whether they were satisfied with the departmental leadership, 79% were dissatisfied, while 21% were satisfied. This means that most respondents were dissatisfied with departmental leadership.

This indicates that church departments, ministries, and services are not being carried out effectively. Each church department should serve as a tool for the spiritual nurture and involvement of church members, rather than merely repeating outdated, irrelevant, and spiritually un-enriching programs led by leaders. There may have been disorganization, communication breakdowns, insufficient training related to job descriptions, and a lack of clear departmental goals, objectives, mission, and vision. Church pastors should train church departmental leaders to demonstrate servant leadership, innovativeness, humility, and spiritual maturity, and to be Bible students and prayer warriors.

These findings coincide with Mensah's (2019) studies, which emphasize how frequently inefficient departmental-level leadership in church ministry results from

poor communication, inadequate training, and ambiguous strategic direction.<sup>81</sup>

Adventist learning community training resources recommend ongoing leadership training, in order to help equip leaders with practical and spiritual tools, that can help departmental leaders to plan, organize, and implement ministry activities that should align with the overall mission of the church.<sup>82</sup>

When departmental leadership fails to meet spiritual or emotional needs, it results in disconnection, frustration, and stagnation, which are risk factors for backsliding.

### **Summary**

The Backslider's Level of Satisfaction with Church Programs. They were dissatisfied with: small group ministry, prayer ministry, Bible study, handling of church finances, elders' way of leadership, Sabbath afternoon program, mid-week prayers, visitation program, returning of tithes and offerings and finally, departmental leadership.

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<sup>81</sup> Kwame Mensah, "Challenges of Departmental Leadership in African Churches," *Journal of Church Administration* 8, no. 2 (2019): 123–140. Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://doi.org/10.5678/jca.v8i2.2019>.

<sup>82</sup> Adventist Learning Community, *Training resources for ministry leaders*, (2023). Accessed 15 May 2025. <https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com>.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a brief summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

#### **Summary of the Results**

The following summarizes the study on assessing the phenomenon of backsliding among men in the selected congregations in Nyamira West Field.

What were the root causes of men's backsliding from church membership based on the first research question? The reasons that stand out as the primary causes of backsliding, which the majority of respondents agreed upon, include: working on the Sabbath, loss of faith and interest, drinking alcohol, criticism from fellow church members, lack of frequent visitations by church leaders, and discrimination against others.

From the second research question, what were the backslider's practices while being a church member before backsliding? The respondents agree that during their personal experience of church membership, the church members were very friendly to them, church leaders related well with the church members, the SDA doctrines were biblical, the church service was interesting and engaging, all easily understood the Bible study, and the family members were happy with their decisions to be converted. There was no red flag to push them out of the church.

However, some of the isolated reasons that might have contributed to their backsliding condition include lack of financial support, lack of conflict resolution management programs, looked down upon, not being accepted, not being loved, lack of forgiveness, not being cared for genuinely, lack of reaching people in the community, the church members' lifestyles not in harmony with the standard of Christian living, lack of commitment and devotion from church members, and not getting involved in all church programs. They neither left the church due to family pressure nor are they happy where they are.

The third research question is, how was the backslider personally involved during church membership before dropping out? The study reveals that the respondents' personal practices and involvement include attending Sabbath School and divine service, praying, and feeling welcomed in the church. In contrast, the respondents were not personally involved in church life: the afternoon program, small group ministry, or mid-week prayer programs, study the Bible, were never visited by church leaders, never participated in helping the needy, were never connected with church leaders, never gave tithes and offerings, and never visited other church members.

The fourth research question is: what is the backslider's level of satisfaction with Church programs? They were satisfied with divine service, Sabbath school, and communion service. In contrast, they were dissatisfied with small group ministry, prayer ministry, Bible study, the handling of church finances, the elders' leadership style, Sabbath afternoon programs, mid-week prayers, the visitation program, the returning of tithes and offerings, and departmental leadership.

In general, the backsliders had varying opinions on the reasons for their backsliding. Some agreed, while others disagreed with the provided reasons. There

were very high percentages of agreement and very low percentages of disagreement and vice versa regarding the causes of backsliding. Most respondents supported the reasons given, making it difficult to determine which one contributed most to their backsliding.

The respondents also varied in their responses towards their personal experiences during their church membership. There are those who agree with the statements at higher percentages and those who disagree with the statements at higher percentages, based on their personal experiences during membership. The respondents again varied in their responses regarding their personal practices and involvement as church members. Some had higher percentages in agreement with the statements given, while others had higher percentages in disagreement with the statements given. The respondents also varied in their responses toward the personal fulfillment from church experiences. There are high percentages of those who disagreed with the statement given, and a high percentage of those who agreed with the statement given.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the abovementioned results, this study concludes that several reasons contribute to backsliding from the church. The factors which stood include:

The reasons and root causes of most men's backsliding from church membership include working on the Sabbath, loss of faith and interest, drinking alcohol, criticism from fellow church members, lack of frequent visitations by church leaders, and discrimination against others.

During the backsliders' church membership experience, the following impacted most of them directly or indirectly: a lack of financial support, lack of conflict resolution management programs, not being accepted, not being loved, lack of forgiveness, not being cared for genuinely, lack of reaching people in the

community, most of the church members' lifestyles not being in harmony with the standards of Christian living, lack of commitment and devotion from church members, and not getting involved in all church programs.

During backsliders' personal practices and involvement as church members, most of them were negatively impacted in the following ways: they never attended the afternoon program, small group ministry, or mid-week prayer program; they never prayed or studied the Bible, were never visited by church leaders, did not participate in helping the needy, never connected with church leaders, never gave tithes and offerings, and they never visited other church members.

The Backslider's Level of Satisfaction with Church Programs. Most of the backsliders were dissatisfied with: small group ministry, prayer ministry, Bible study, handling of church finances, the elders' leadership approach, the Sabbath afternoon program, mid-week prayers, the visitation program, returning tithes and offerings, and departmental leadership.

The factors were spread across the four research questions. Most of the backsliders held varied opinions regarding the root causes of backsliding, their personal experiences during church membership, their personal practices, and their involvement in church activities. Finally, most of the backsliders expressed their personal satisfaction with the church programs.

### **Recommendations**

Gleaning the summary of findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are explicitly addressed to church membership, global church leadership, local church administration, backsliders, and church scholars. The final discussion of the recommendations focuses on future research that may be undertaken based on the implications of the results of this study.

There is a need to develop a program, strategy, or model to nurture the spiritual growth of new converts before and after baptism.

**Global Church Leadership:** Given that many members backslide for various reasons, global church leadership needs to devise discipleship and mentorship programs that can be implemented to ensure backsliders are reclaimed, retained, and nurtured into mainstream churches.

**Local Church Administration:** Based on the findings, this study recommends that the church diversify activities that involve every member so that they feel an integral part of the church and that their contributions, no matter how small, are recognized by the church administration. Some programs to be implemented include small group ministry, prayer ministry, Bible study ministry, the Sabbath afternoon program, mid-week prayers, the visitation program, teaching on the return of tithes and offerings, and training on leadership.

The Field office should develop weekly registers to record Sabbath School attendance, initiate action units, and establish a regular training program for pastors and church elders to manage the aforementioned programs. The Field office should emphasize and implement a parenting program and a happiness class for newly baptized members.

**Backsliders:** Based on findings that backsliders have various reasons for their actions, this study recommends that active church members engage with church leadership whenever they suspect some members are backsliding and drifting away from the congregation, before the situation worsens and they leave the church.

There is a need for church pastors to develop and implement weekly teaching seminar materials, Bible interpretation study guides, and close-range training guidelines.

It is recommended that further research be conducted to examine the relationship between the method of conversion and the likelihood of backsliding. This involves evaluating whether individuals who convert through emotional appeals, mass evangelistic campaigns, camp meetings, revivals, outreach programs, or peer influence show different long-term spiritual stability compared to those who convert through structured Bible study, personal conviction, or discipleship-based processes.

Church Scholars: Given the findings indicating the difficulty in identifying the dominant reasons for backsliding from the church, this study suggests conducting qualitative research that allows backsliders the freedom to identify and articulate their specific reasons for backsliding. Quantitative studies like this tend to be quite restrictive, limiting the ability of backsliders to provide detailed explanations of their experiences.

To further understand the phenomenon of backsliding, a mixed-method approach is needed, involving a questionnaire, focus group discussions, and interviews.

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## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT

#### **Adventist University of Africa Theological Seminary**

Dear Participant

You are being requested to voluntarily participate in a research study entitled:  
**ASSESSING THE PHENOMENON OF BACKSLIDING AMONG MEN IN THE  
SELECTED CONGREGATIONS INNYAMIRA WEST FIELD**

The purpose of this study is first to understand the reasons for men backsliding from weekly Sabbath attendance and worship services. The result of this study will be used to curb the backsliding of men, reclaim, retain, and nurture the newcomers, and finally, disciple and mentor those already in the church.

You are requested to fill out a questionnaire presented to you, as a tool for data collection. A quantitative research design will be adopted and applied to the data. Data will be disseminated through the publication of a dissertation.

For you to participate, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire that has:

- A. Demography: 8 areas that may take 3 minutes
- B. Level of Agreement; 17 questions that may take 5 minutes
- C. Level of Agreement: 19 questions that may take 8 minutes.
- D. Level of Frequency: 15 questions that may take 7 minutes
- E. Level of Satisfaction 13 questions that may take you 7 minutes

Finishing the questionnaire should take approximately thirty minutes. Using the provided pen tick a suitable response on the questionnaire.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you sign at the bottom of this form, it means that you are giving your consent to be in the study. If you do not want to participate in the study, do not begin filling out the questionnaire or participating in other research activities. If you start to fill out the questionnaire and decide you do not want to participate, stop filling it and give it to the researcher. There is no penalty for not participating and your questionnaire will not be used.

If you participate, you will contribute to the knowledge about the backsliding of men from weekly church services, which may lead to get remedies for the situation.

Your personal information will be kept confidential. You will NOT write your name on the questionnaire and this form is separate from the questionnaire – this ensures that your identity will remain anonymous. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially. No one other than the researcher will have access to the data and all data will be kept on a password-protected computer.

The researcher will answer any question you have about the study, and you should ask them at the beginning of the research, by emailing or calling the researcher, whose contact information is listed at the bottom of this consent.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, contact the AUA Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee, Adventist University of Africa [ethics@aua.ac.ke](mailto:ethics@aua.ac.ke).

I have read and fully understood the statements on this form. All questions were answered satisfactorily. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you have concerns about this research, please contact the advisor of the research:  
Dr. Mahlon Juma,  
[jumamn@aua.ac.ke](mailto:jumamn@aua.ac.ke),  
+254 799 595 232

Thank you.

Candidate: Peter Omundi Aricha  
+254 725 669 535  
[arichap@aua.ac.ke](mailto:arichap@aua.ac.ke)

## APPENDIX B

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent, you are therefore kindly requested to share your honest opinion as a worthwhile contribution to the ultimate purpose of the research. Kindly use the scale for each section of the questionnaire to express the degree or intensity of your opinion.

#### **PART A: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

1. Age Bracket:
  - a) 18 – 20 years [ ]
  - b) 20 – 30 years [ ]
  - c) 31 – 44 years [ ]
  - d) 45 – 64 years [ ]
  - e) 65 years and above [ ]
2. Age at Baptism:
  - a) 12 – 15 years [ ]
  - b) 16 – 20 years [ ]
  - c) 21 – 25 years [ ]
  - d) 26 – 30 years [ ]
  - e) 31 – 40 years [ ]
  - f) 41 years and above [ ]
3. Marital Status:
  - a) Single [ ]
  - b) Married [ ]
  - c) Separated [ ]
  - d) Divorced [ ]
  - e) Widowed [ ]
4. Family Background:
  - a) Both parents are Adventists [ ]
  - b) One parent is an Adventist [ ]
  - c) None is an Adventist [ ]
5. Your Previous Religious Background:
  - a) Adventist [ ]
  - b) Christianity (Specify Denomination) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) Muslim [ ]
  - d) Other \_\_\_\_\_
6. The period between your Baptism and leaving the church:
  - a) 0 – 6months [ ]
  - b) 7months – 1year [ ]
  - e) 1 – 2 years [ ]
  - c) 2 – 4 years [ ]
  - d) 5 – 7 years [ ]
  - e) 8 – 10 years [ ]

- f) 11 years and above [ ]
7. Education Background:
- a) Elementary [ ]
  - b) High School [ ]
  - c) TVET College [ ]
  - d) University [ ]
8. Occupation:
- a) Employed [ ]
  - b) Self-employed [ ]
  - c) Unemployed [ ]

**PART B: THE REASONS FOR BACKSLIDING AMONG MEN**

Please indicate the level of agreement with each of the following questions. Tick a box that captures your response.

**Key**

NO	4-Strongly Agree 3-Agree 2-Disagree 1-Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	Level of Agreement	4	3	2	1
	<b>The Reasons for backsliding among men</b>				
1.	Lack of financial support	4	3	2	1
2.	Working on Sabbath	4	3	2	1
3.	Not well instructed in the Bible and Adventist beliefs before baptism	4	3	2	1
4.	Loss of faith	4	3	2	1
5.	Loss of Interest	4	3	2	1
6.	Involved in smoking	4	3	2	1
7.	Involved in drinking alcohol	4	3	2	1
8.	Getting involved in sexual misconduct	4	3	2	1
9.	Conflicts with church members	4	3	2	1
10.	Conflicts within the family	4	3	2	1
11.	Criticism from fellow church members	4	3	2	1
12.	Lack of frequent visitation by church leaders	4	3	2	1
13.	Discriminated against	4	3	2	1
14.	Disagreed with some church doctrines	4	3	2	1
15.	Sickness	4	3	2	1
16.	Loss of a family member	4	3	2	1
17.	Frequent financial church contributions	4	3	2	1

**PART C: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE DURING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

Please indicate the level of agreement with each of the following questions. Tick a box that captures your response.

**Key**

NO	<b>4-Strongly Agree</b> <b>3-Agree</b> <b>2-Disagree</b> <b>1-Strongly Disagree</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		4	3	2	1
	<b>Level of Agreement</b>				
	<b>While I was attending the Church</b>				
1.	Church members were very friendly to me	4	3	2	1
2.	The SDA doctrines are Biblical	4	3	2	1
3.	Church leaders were relating well with the church members	4	3	2	1
4.	Church service was interesting and engaging	4	3	2	1
5.	Church provided financial support for those in need	4	3	2	1
6.	Church had conflict resolution management program	4	3	2	1
7.	Church members did not look down upon others	4	3	2	1
8.	Church members accepted all people as they were	4	3	2	1
9.	Church members showed love for all people	4	3	2	1
10.	The church members were forgiving	4	3	2	1
11.	The church members were genuinely caring	4	3	2	1
12.	The church was involved in reaching out to the people in the community	4	3	2	1
13.	The lifestyle of church members was in harmony with the standards of Christian living	4	3	2	1
14.	The Bible study was easily understood by all	4	3	2	1
15.	The church members were committed and devoted Christians	4	3	2	1
16.	The majority of the church members were involved in all church programs	4	3	2	1
17.	The family members were happy with my decision to be converted	4	3	2	1
18.	New converts left the church due to family pressure	4	3	2	1
19.	The new converts who left the church are happier where they are	4	3	2	1

**PART D: PERSONAL PRACTICES AND INVOLVEMENT AS A CHURCH MEMBER**

Please indicate the level of frequency with each of the following questions. Tick a box that captures your response.

Key

NO	4-Always 3-Often 2-Rarely 1-Never  Level of Frequency	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
		4	3	2	1
	<b>While being a church member:</b>				
1.	I attended Sabbath school	4	3	2	1
2.	I attended the divine worship	4	3	2	1
3.	I attended afternoon program	4	3	2	1
4.	I attended a small group ministry	4	3	2	1
5.	I attended mid-week prayer program	4	3	2	1
6.	I prayed	4	3	2	1
7.	I studied the Bible	4	3	2	1
8.	I felt welcomed in the church	4	3	2	1
9.	I was visited by church leaders	4	3	2	1
10.	I was visited by church members	4	3	2	1
11.	I participated in helping the needy people	4	3	2	1
12.	I had connection with the church members	4	3	2	1
13.	I used to work on Sabbath being a church member	4	3	2	1
14.	I gave tithes and offerings	4	3	2	1
15.	I visited other church members	4	3	2	1

**PART E: PERSONAL FULFILMENT FROM CHURCH EXPERIENCE**

Please indicate the level of your satisfaction with each of the following questions. Tick a box that captures your response.

Key


NO	4-Very Satisfied 3-Satisfied 2-Dissatisfied 1-Very Dissatisfied  Level of Satisfaction	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
		4	3	2	1
	<b>While being a church member how were you satisfied with:</b>				
1.	Divine service worship	4	3	2	1
2.	Sabbath School	4	3	2	1
3.	Small group ministry	4	3	2	1
4.	Prayer ministry	4	3	2	1
5.	Bible Study	4	3	2	1
6.	Communion Service	4	3	2	1

7.	Handling the church finances	4	3	2	1
8.	Elders' way of leadership	4	3	2	1
9.	Sabbath afternoon program	4	3	2	1
10.	Mid-week prayers	4	3	2	1
11.	Visitation program	4	3	2	1
12.	Returning of tithes and offerings	4	3	2	1
13.	Departmental leadership	4	3	2	1


## APPENDIX C

### LETTERS

#### Letter from AUA



**Adventist University of Africa**  
*Developing Leaders for Service*  
A Private Chartered University Accredited by Commission for University Education, Kenya



12<sup>th</sup> April, 2024

Peter Omundi Aricha  
Theological Seminary  
Adventist University of Africa, Kenya

**Reference: AUA/ISERC/18/03/2024**

Dear Peter Omundi Aricha

**RE: ASSESSING THE PHENOMENON OF BACKSLIDING AMONG MEN IN THE SELECTED CONGREGATIONS IN NYAMIRA WEST FIELD**


This is to inform you that the Adventist University of Africa Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee (AUA-ISERC) has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is AUA/ISERC/2024/014. The approval period is **15<sup>th</sup> April 2024 – 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- Only approved documents (including informed consent and study instruments) will be used.
- All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by AUA-ISERC.
- Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to AUA-ISERC within 72 hours of notification.
- Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others, or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to AUA-ISERC within 72 hours.
- Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to the expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to AUA-ISERC.


Prior to commencing your study, you are expected to obtain permissions or any other clearances needed.

Yours Sincerely



Josephine Ganu, Ph.D.  
Chair, Institutional Scientific Ethics Review C'ttee  
[ethics@aua.ac.ke](mailto:ethics@aua.ac.ke)

ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA  
ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE  
PRIVATE BAG MBAGATHI - 00503,  
NAIROBI - KENYA



Physical Address: Advent Hill, Magadi Road, Ongata Rongai, Kajiado, Kenya | Tel: +254 730 733400  
Postal Address: Private Bag, Mbagathi, 00503 Nairobi, Kenya | Email: [info@aua.ac.ke](mailto:info@aua.ac.ke) | Web: [www.aua.ac.ke](http://www.aua.ac.ke)



Adventist University of Africa

*Developing Leaders for Service*

A Private Chartered University Accredited by Commission for University Education, Kenya



|  
April 15, 2024

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: LETTER OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY (DMIN) RESEARCH.**

We hereby introduce to you Aricha Peter Omundi (AUA Student ID Number S2017110) who is pursuing a Doctor of Ministry (DMIN) at the Adventist University of Africa.

The student (from Kenya) is working on a research topic title: “**Assessing the Phenomenon of Backsliding Among Men in the Selected Congregations in Nyamira West Field**”. He intends to do his fieldwork at Mochenwa and Rigena Pastoral Districts both in Masaba North Subcounty – Nyamira County. His research proposal has been approved by the Adventist University of Africa Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee (AUA-ISREC), approval number AUA/ISREC/2024/014 and it will be attached to the Dissertation Proposal. The duration of the research project data collection will run from April 15, 2024, to April 14, 2025.






We would be pleased if you permit him from your end to enable our student to carry out his research in the above-mentioned research site.

Thanks with much appreciation for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

*Felix Poryatovskiy, PhD*  
*Dean, Theological Seminary*  
P.O. Private Bag Mbagathi 00503 Nairobi, Kenya  
Advent Hill Magadi Road, Ongata

# Research Permit

 <b>REPUBLIC OF KENYA</b>	 <b>NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &amp; INNOVATION</b>
Ref No: <b>875805</b>	Date of Issue: <b>02/March/2023</b>
<b>RESEARCH LICENSE</b>	
	
<b>This is to Certify that Mr.. Peter Omundi Aricha of Adventist University of Africa, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nyamira on the topic: A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR THE SPIRITUAL MENTORING OF MEN IN THE MOCHENWA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH for the period ending : 02/March/2024.</b>	
License No: <b>NACOSTI/P/23/24039</b>	
<b>875805</b>	
Applicant Identification Number	Director General <b>NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &amp; INNOVATION</b>
	Verification QR Code
	
<b>NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.</b>	
<b>See overleaf for conditions</b>	

Nyamira County Commissioner's Office

**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**



**THE PRESIDENCY**

**Ministry of Interior and National Administration**

Telephone: 058-6144446

Email: [ccnyamira@yahoo.com](mailto:ccnyamira@yahoo.com).  
[ccnyamira2012@gmail.com](mailto:ccnyamira2012@gmail.com).

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER  
NYAMIRA COUNTY  
P.O. BOX 2 - 40500  
NYAMIRA

When replying please quote our

Ref. No. NYRC/ED.2/VO.III/79

DATE: 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER,  
MASABA NORTH..

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION – MR. PETER OMUNDI ARICHA  
ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA**

Reference is made to a letter Ref.NACOSTI/P//23/24039 from Director General NACOSTI dated 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 authorizing **PETER OMUNDI ARICHA** to conduct research on **“ADISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR THE SPIRITUAL MENTORING OF MEN IN THE MOCHENWA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH ”**

The planned research will be conducted in your sub-county for the period ending 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2024, 2024.

Kindly accord him the necessary assistance he may require.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Millicent Gatimu'.

MILLCENT GATIMU  
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER  
NYAMIRA.

Copy to:

The County Director of Education,  
P.O.Box 4,  
NYAMIRA.

Nyamira County Ministry of Education Office



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**STATE DEPARTMENT of Early Learning and Basic Education**

Telegram: "EDUCATION", Nyamira

Telephone: (058) 6144224

E-Mail. [cdenyamiracounty@gmail.com](mailto:cdenyamiracounty@gmail.com)

When replying please quote

**COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**NYAMIRA COUNTY**

**P.O.BOX 745-40500**

**NYAMIRA**

**REF:** NCEO/1/25/vol.111/91

**DATE:** 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**RE: AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH BY -MR.PETER OMUNDI  
ARICHA OF ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA**

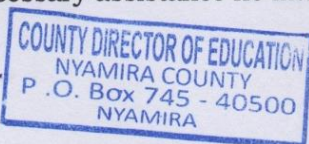
Reference is made to the letter Ref. NACOSTI/P/23/24039 dated 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2023 from Director General NACOSTI authorizing **PETER OMUNDI ARICHA** to conduct research on "**A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR THE SPIRITUAL MENTORING OF MEN IN THE MOCHENWA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**"

The planned research will be conducted in Masaba North Sub-County in Nyamira County the period ending 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2024

Kindly accord him necessary assistance he may require.

**SAMSON WUAPARI**

**FOR; COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
NYAMIRA COUNTY**



## Nyamira West Field

Seventh-day Adventist Church  
Nyamira West Field  
Executive Secretary

P.O. Box 4546, KISII  
Tel: 0711 148 722 / 0722 489 386  
Email: secretary@nwf.adventist.or.ke  
www.nwf.adventist.or.ke



DATE: 3<sup>RD</sup> APRIL, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: PR. PETER OMUNDI ARICHA- DATA COLLECTION

Reference is hereby made to the letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2023  
Ref. NCEO/1/25/vol.111/91 from the Ministry of Education authorizing Pr. Peter  
Omundi Aricha to conduct his academic research on "A Discipleship Model for the  
Spiritual Mentoring of Men in the Seventh-day Adventists, Mochenwa Church",  
Masaba North Sub-County for the period ending 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2024.

The research is purely for academic purposes and we hereby request that you give him  
all the necessary support towards the exercise.

Yours faithfully

PR. ZABLON NYANUMBA  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
NYAMIRA WEST FIELD



CC: OFFICERS - NWF

## VITAE

### PERSONAL DETAILS

**Name** : Peter Omundi Aricha  
**Date of Birth** : 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1976  
**Gender** : Male  
**Marital Status:** Married  
**Nationality** : Kenyan  
**ID No.** : 20355165  
**Religion** : Christian  
**Profession** : Pastor  
**Postal Address:** P.O. BOX 1522 - 40200, Kisii  
**E-mail IDs** : peteroa14@gmail.com& arichap@aua.ac.ke  
**Mobile Nos.** : +254 725 669535 & +254 732 772510

### EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

**June 2017 – to date:** Doctor of Ministry (DMin) Student, from Adventist University of Africa (AUA). Completed coursework, going on with Dissertation Research Project.  
**2013 – 2016** : Masters in Theology (NT) Degree, from St. Paul's University, Limuru  
**2005 – 2007** : MA Sociology Degree, from Tilak Maharashtra University, India  
**2002; 2006** : Completed Two (2) Semesters of MA Biblical Theological Studies from Spicer Memorial College (Under Andrews University Program)  
**1998 – 2002** : Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) Degree, from Spicer Memorial College, India  
**1993 – 1996** : Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) from Nyambaria High School  
**1984 – 1992** : Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) from Nyaisa SDA Primary School

### WORK EXPERIENCE

**Jan. 2022 to date:** **District/ Leader Pastor** – Rigena Pastoral District, Nyamira West Field.  
**Jan.2018 – Dec. 2021:** **District/ Leader Pastor** – Mochenwa Pastoral District, Nyamira Conference/Nyamira West Field.  
**Nov. 2015 – Dec. 2017:** **District/ Leader Pastor** – Menyenya Pastoral District, Nyamira Conference.  
**Feb. 2015 – Oct. 2015:** **District/ Leader Pastor** – Kineni Pastoral District, Nyamira Conference.

**21<sup>th</sup> April 2012:** Ordained into Ministerial office.  
**Feb.2010 – Jan. 2015: District/ Leader Pastor** – Nyamusi Pastoral District, Nyamira Conference.  
**2009 – Feb. 2010: Associate Pastor;** Nyeri West SDA Church (by Discovery Foundation International  
**2008 – April 2009: Chaplain;** Marindi Secondary School  
**2007 – Aug. 2008: Associate Pastor;** Gesiaga Pastorate District  
**2002 – 2007:** Worked among the African-Indian Community as a **Pastor (Self- Sponsored Missionary), Counselor,** and also an **Executive Treasurer** of the **African-Indian Trust Fund - Integrated Rural Development Association (AITF-IRDA)** for **5** years.

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

**May 2022 to date:** BOM Executive member, Nyaikuro High School  
**2022 to date:** Adventist Youth Ministries Advisor, Rigoma Station in Nyamira West Field  
**Oct. 2015 – 2021:** BOM Chairman, Nyaisa-Manga SDA Secondary School  
**Sept. 2018 – 2021:** Pathfinder Advisor, Upper Tombe Station in Nyamira Conference  
**2015 – Feb. 2018:** Pathfinder Advisor, Matutu Station as well as Pathfinder Advisor Nyamira Conference  
**2011 – 2014:** Youth Advisor, Gesura Station, Nyamira Conference  
**2006 – 2007:** Chairman of the African Students Seminar (Spicer Memorial College)  
**2006 – 2007:** Chaplain of All India African Adventist Student Association (AIAASA)  
**2006 – 2007:** Trained as a Master Guide leader from Spicer Memorial College, India.  
**2000 – 2002:** A leader of the African Harvesters Choir at Spicer Memorial College; activities involved: Outreach Ministry to Orphanages, Prisons, and Slum dwellers.  
**1997 – 1998:** Youth leader in my local church (Nyaisa SDA Church)  
**1993 – 1996:** Spiritual Leader/ Church Chairman at Nyambaria High School

## ACHIEVEMENTS

### India Chapter

- **Pioneer** of the first African-Indian (AI) School for the Africans who were uprooted from Africa as Slaves to India, under the African-Indian Trust Fund-Integrated Rural Development Association (**AITF-IRDA**) **NGO**. We were Sponsored and bought **15 acres** of land for the school, and by the time I left the construction of the school building was going on. The first floor of the first 5 classrooms had been completed.
- Mobilized young school dropouts and took them back to school to further their studies. By the time I left **10 students** had graduated with degrees from the University. More than **200 pupils/ students** were pursuing their Primary and Secondary school studies respectively through the sponsorship of Asian Aid International.

- Reorganized the churches which had been shut down due to fights from the Catholics, Muslims, and Hindu communities. At the same time, we planted new churches.
- Started a Technical training center for the Women: Making Spices and Tailoring.

#### **Kenya Chapter**

- **One of the Pioneers** of the **EnglishGood News SDA** Church in Nyeri town.
- Implemented prayer bands (**Cell groups**) across the district.
- Quarterly revivals, seminars, and baptisms.
- Initiated monthly Elders' Council (**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month**).
- Started monthly Lay Preachers' training Seminars (**last Sunday of every month**).

#### **HOBBIES**

Reading, listening to soft Gospel Music, making new friends, socializing, helping the needy, pathfinding, participating in community activities, adventuring, Athletics, and football.