

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Divinity

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: A SOCIAL MEDIA EVANGELISTIC PROGRAM TO REACH OUT TO THE 21ST CENTURY YOUTH: A CASE STUDY AT GILEAD SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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In the contemporary digital age, social media has emerged as a transformative force, not only in communication but also in religious outreach and evangelism, especially among the youth. Social media platforms provide an unparalleled space for engaging the youth population.

This project set out to explore the impact of social media as a means of evangelizing the youth population. By examining the effectiveness, engagement factors, influence, and challenges associated with social media evangelism, this research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Seventh-day Adventist Church can effectively utilize social media platforms to engage and inspire the youth in matters of faith and spirituality.

A structured questionnaire to assess the effectiveness and reach of social media evangelism among the youth population was designed. Data was collected from members of Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church and other youth. From this, a social media evangelistic program was designed and implemented.

The social media evangelistic program was not only a numerical success but also succeeded in creating a vibrant online community and fostering meaningful engagement. The positive outcomes provided a strong foundation for future evangelistic efforts using social media and this showcased the platform's potential for impactful outreach and community building.

Keywords: Social media, Evangelism, Youth, Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree
Master of Divinity

by

Edmond Adjei Boadu

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I dedicate this work to my beloved wife, Lydia Akoto, and children Antwiwaa, Aseda, Osei, and Kofi without whose constant support this thesis work was not possible. I am grateful for their kind words and encouragement during this work.

I also dedicate this thesis to the entire membership of the Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church which inspired this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is currently grappling with a concerning trend as its youth exhibit a waning interest in church activities. A growing number of young individuals are distancing themselves from the church community, with even those who remain expressing feelings of alienation. Participation in Bible studies among the youth is on a decline, and there is a noticeable decrease in their enthusiasm for engaging in evangelism outreach efforts. These observations are supported by various sources within the Seventh-day Adventist community, including articles such as "Why Do They Walk Away? The Heart Cry of Adventist Parents," from the Adventist Review,¹ "Adventist youth cry out!" from Ministry Magazine,² and "Generation Change: Why Our Youth Leave" by Spectrum Magazine.³ These references shed light on the challenges faced by the church in retaining and engaging its younger members, emphasizing the need for innovative approaches to address this issue.

¹ David Trim, "Why Do They Walk Away? The Heart Cry of Adventist Parents," January 21, 2022, accessed March 20, 2024, <https://adventistreview.org/commentary/why-do-they-walk-away-the-heart-cry-of-adventist-parents/>.

² Roger Dudley, "Adventist Youth Cry Out," accessed March 6, 2024, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1992/04/adventist-youth-cry-out>.

³ Sammy Reyes, "Generation Change: Why Our Youth Leave," accessed March 20, 2024, <https://spectrummagazine.org/views/generation-change-why-our-youth-leave/>.

Simultaneously, there is a significant population of young people in communities seeking familial connections, refuge, and a sense of belonging. Many youths are grappling with challenges such as substance abuse, promiscuity, and identity issues, highlighting the urgent need for the church to extend its outreach efforts.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church boasts a significant heritage originating from the commitment of young individuals who were pivotal in its establishment. Figures like Ellen Harmon White, John Loughborough, J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, and John Harvey Kellogg were adolescents and young people when they commenced their noteworthy involvement in shaping the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁴

Youth Ministries within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, structured to prepare young people for evangelism, have been instrumental in nurturing faith and engagement. Notably, the Pathfinder Club emphasizes the mission of spreading the Advent message globally.⁵ This emphasizes the commitment of Pathfinders to share the message of Adventism with the entire world during their generation.

However, with the proliferation of the internet and social media, the landscape of youth ministry has transformed. This digital age has revolutionized communication and connectivity, bringing individuals from diverse backgrounds onto a single platform—the virtual world.⁶

⁴ Lynette Frantzen, “Young Adventist Pioneers,” *Adventist Review*, May 2004, 2.

⁵ Adventist Youth Ministries, “Aim, Motto, Pledge, and Law,” accessed October 3, 2023 <https://www.gcyouthministries.org/ministries/pathfinders/aim-motto-pledge-and-law/>.

⁶ Kim Nevelsteen, "Virtual World, Defined from a Technological Perspective, and Applied to Video Games, Mixed Reality and the Metaverse," *Computer Animation & Virtual Worlds* 29 (2018): e1752, <https://doi.org/10.1002/cav.1752>.

While social media offers unparalleled advantages such as global connectivity, self-promotion, and access to information and resources, it also poses challenges. Social media addiction, narcissism, cyber-crime, and mental health issues have emerged as significant concerns, particularly among the youth. According to a study by Newport Institute, social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, which focus on self-image sharing, can contribute to narcissism in young adults. Studies suggest that increased usage of social media is associated with elevated levels of grandiose narcissism, particularly among individuals who frequently post numerous photos and selfies, resulting in a 25 percent rise in narcissistic tendencies.⁷

Research indicates a substantial increase in social media usage, with a considerable portion of the youth population being affected by addiction and associated negative consequences. In a 2020 publication in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (CMAJ) authored by Abi-Jaoude, E., Naylor, K.T., and Pignatiello, A., titled "Smartphones, Social Media Use and Youth Mental Health," the study highlights the impact of social media on the mental well-being of young individuals, revealing a significant correlation between their engagement with social media and negative effects on their mental health.⁸

Education and awareness have experienced remarkable advancements due to the emergence of the internet and social media. With just a click of a computer mouse or a tap on a smartphone, a vast amount of information becomes readily accessible to anyone. Consequently, individuals can swiftly learn and stay updated on trending

⁷ "Social Media Narcissism in Young Adults," accessed March 20, 2024, <https://www.newportinstitute.com/resources/mental-health/social-media-narcissism/>.

⁸ Elia Abi-Jaoude, Karline Naylor, and Antonio Pignatiello, "Smartphones, Social Media Use and Youth Mental Health," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 192 (2020): E136-E141, <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.190434>.

topics, gaining access to the latest information on various subjects much more rapidly than ever before.⁹

The Christian youth, including those within the Seventh-day Adventist community, are not exempt from these advancements. Many young individuals now have access to smartphones, enabling them to engage with various social media platforms. It's observed that youth dedicate a significant portion of their time to social media activities nowadays. Recent research conducted by Microsoft suggests that approximately 77% of social media users may exhibit signs of addiction to these platforms.¹⁰

Due to the growing reliance on digital technology, the average human attention span has dwindled from twelve seconds in 2000 to a mere eight seconds today. Remarkably, this attention span is now even shorter than that of a goldfish, which typically maintains focus for around nine seconds.¹¹ Moreover, as a supplementary repercussion, the practice of memorizing Bible passages tends to be overlooked, given that individuals can swiftly locate any passage they need on a digital device.¹²

⁹ Abi-Jaoude, Naylor, and Pignatiello, "Smartphones, Social Media Use and Youth Mental Health," E136-E141.

¹⁰ Lizette Borreli, "Human Attention Span Shortens to 8 Seconds Due to Digital Technology: 3 Ways to Stay Focused," *Medical Daily*, May 14, 2015, <https://www.medicaldaily.com/human-attention-span-shortens-8-seconds-due-digital-technology-3-ways-stay-focused-333474> (accessed July 7, 2019)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Elias Brasil de Souza, "Digital Technology and the Christian Life," accessed March 21, 2024, <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/digital-technology-and-the-christian-life/>.

Social media use among the youth in Ghana has been on the ascendency over the years. Approximately 6.60 million Ghanaians which is about 19.5 percent of the population of Ghana use social media.¹³ 65.7 percent of social media users in Ghana are between the ages of 18 and 34.¹⁴ According to the Ghana Statistical Services, about 38% of the population of Ghana is made up of young people between the ages of 15 and 35.¹⁵

Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church is a youth-oriented Adventist church located in the central part of Kumasi in Ghana established in the year 2020. The membership of Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church are members of Generation Y (Millennials) and Z (Gen Z). These are people who were born from 1980 to date. The two generations are referred to as the digital generations because they were born during the era of computers and the internet. These generations are perceived as highly and increasingly intuitive when it comes to technology.¹⁶

The church, cognizant of the technological inclinations of its members, embraces various ministry areas, including digital evangelism, professional outreach, prison and drug rehabilitation ministries, and medical missions. Gilead SDA Church leverages major social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram,

¹³ Joseph-Albert Kuuire, "The State Of Social Media In Ghana For 2023," accessed February 5, 2024, <https://techlabari.com/the-state-of-social-media-in-ghana-for-2023/>.

¹⁴ Doris Dokua Sasu, "Distribution of Facebook Users in Ghana as of May 2023, by Age Group," accessed January 5, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1172099/facebook-users-in-ghana-by-age-group/>.

¹⁵ Ghana Statistical Services, "Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census General Report Volume 3," accessed January 29, 2024, <https://census2021.statsghana.gov.gh/subreport.php?readreport=MjYzOTE0MjAuMzc2NQ==&Ghana-2021-Population-and-Housing-Census-General-Report-Volume-3B>.

¹⁶ Neil Selwyn, "The Digital Native – Myth and Reality," *ASLIB Proceedings* 61, no. 4 (July 5, 2009): 364–379, <https://doi.org/10.1108/00012530910973776>, [ProQuest 217758813].

YouTube, and Twitter to disseminate its message and engage with members. Notably, online platforms have become integral for broadcasting church services and

conducting special events like Week of Prayer and Stewardship Emphasis Week. As the church navigates the challenges and opportunities presented by social media, it aims to effectively utilize these platforms to evangelize, foster community, and nurture spiritual growth among the youth population.

Statement of the Problem

In the present setting, the advent and ubiquity of social media have transformed communication and information dissemination. Among its diverse applications, social media is a potent tool with transformative potential in religious spheres, particularly in evangelizing the youth. The youth demographic, known for its digital nativity and propensity for online engagement, represents a critical target for religious institutions seeking to extend their outreach.

The youth spend most of their time on digital platforms more than the physical world. Everything in our world from relationships to education has now become virtual and this has limited face-to-face contact with people. The youth no longer go to church holding traditional bibles, hymn books, and Sabbath school because they have digital versions on their phones and tablets.

The youth in the community are displaying a decreased interest in face-to-face evangelism, posing challenges for outreach efforts in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Traditional methods such as house-to-house evangelism, particularly prevalent in the Ashanti region of Ghana within the Northern Ghana Union of the Adventist Church, are becoming less effective in reaching young individuals. This ardent challenge raises some difficult questions that the study intends to address including: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church can make use of social media as a means of evangelizing the youth population? How does the use of social media as a

means of evangelism compare to traditional methods of evangelism in terms of reach, engagement, and long-term impact?

What factors contribute to the engagement of young individuals with religious content on social media? How do different social media platforms and content formats influence their level of engagement and participation in religious discussions? What are the challenges and limitations faced by religious organizations when using social media for evangelizing the youth? How can these challenges be addressed to enhance the effectiveness and impact of social media evangelism?

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to assess the Seventh-day Adventist Church's ability to leverage social media for evangelizing the youth demographic. The study will specifically evaluate the effectiveness of social media evangelism in comparison to traditional methods, focusing on metrics such as reach, engagement, and long-term impact. Moreover, the research aims to pinpoint the factors driving young individuals' engagement with religious content on social media. It will delve into how various platforms and content formats influence their level of participation in religious discussions.

Furthermore, the study aims to identify the challenges and limitations faced by religious organizations when using social media for evangelizing the youth and propose strategies to address these challenges to enhance the effectiveness and impact of social media evangelism efforts. Through this research, insights will be gained into optimizing social media evangelism practices within the Seventh-day Adventist Church to effectively reach and engage the youth demographic in spreading the Gospel message.

Justification of the Project

The Bible recounts numerous stories of young individuals who devoted their lives to the service of God. Their ability to do so was often attributed to their proper training. Ellen G. White emphasized the importance of this training by stating that "with such an army of workers as our youth rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen and soon coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world."¹⁷

The growing influence of social media in shaping the beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes of the youth necessitates an examination of its potential as a tool for evangelism. Traditional methods of religious outreach may struggle to resonate with the younger generation, making social media an appealing avenue for religious organizations seeking to reach and engage youth audiences.

By investigating the effectiveness and implications of social media evangelism, this study will provide valuable insights into the evolving nature of religious communication in the digital age.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the Biblical and Theological foundations of youth in evangelism in the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Spirit of Prophecy.
2. To assess the effectiveness of social media as a means of evangelizing the youth population by comparing it to traditional methods of evangelism in terms of reach, engagement, and long-term impact.

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), 271.

3. To identify the factors that contribute to youth engagement with religious content on social media, including the influence of different platforms and content formats.
4. To design and implement an effective social media evangelistic program to be used to reach out to both Seventh-day Adventist and Non-Seventh-day Adventist Youth.

Description of the Thesis Process

This project will first discuss the biblical and theological basis for Youth in evangelism in Chapter Two. The various examples and forms of evangelism by the youth both in the Old and New Testament as well as the Spirit of Prophecy will be discussed. Finally, the chapter will conclude with various youth evangelistic projects in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and recommendations from the Spirit of Prophecy.

Chapter three of this project will delve into an extensive review of existing literature regarding the utilization of social media within religious contexts. It will encompass studies examining the presence and engagement strategies of religious organizations on various social media platforms. The chapter will scrutinize the efficacy of social media in disseminating religious messages and captivating youth audiences. Moreover, factors contributing to youth engagement with religious content on social media, including authenticity, relevance, interactivity, and community building, will be thoroughly examined and analysed.

The chapter will also review the theoretical frameworks and models relevant to social media evangelism and youth engagement and discuss methodologies employed in previous studies on similar topics, such as surveys, content analysis, interviews, and mixed methods approaches.

Chapter four of this project will look at the justification of the research methodology used, the sample selected, and the sample size. The profile of Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church and its ministry focus will also be discussed. The results of the performed research will be discussed and then a program for conducting bible studies and reaching out to other youth through social media by the youth will be developed. This program will be based on the theological foundation and the literature review as well as the research that will be conducted among the youth on their perception of the internet, social media, and missions.

The fifth chapter will look at how the program that was designed in Chapter Four will be implemented and evaluated.

Finally, the last chapter of the project will discuss the success or failure of the program and then summarize the whole project with recommendations.

Expectation of the Thesis

The study on the impact of social media as a means of evangelizing the youth is expected to provide several key contributions:

Improved Understanding: The research aims to enhance the understanding of the effectiveness, engagement factors, influence, and challenges associated with social media evangelism among the youth. It will provide insights into how religious organizations can effectively leverage social media platforms to connect with and inspire the younger generation.

Empirical Evidence: Using quantitative surveys, the study will generate empirical evidence regarding the impact of social media evangelism on the beliefs, values, behaviors, and religious experiences of the youth. This evidence will help validate and support existing theories or provide new insights into this emerging field of study.

Practical Recommendations: The research findings and analysis will lead to the development of practical recommendations for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana and Africa in using social media as a strategic tool for youth evangelism. These recommendations will guide the formulation of effective strategies, content creation, and engagement approaches tailored to the preferences and characteristics of the youth population.

Bridging the Gap: The study aims to fill a significant gap in current understanding by concentrating on the impact of social media evangelism specifically on the youth population. By doing so, it will expand the existing body of research, shedding light on youth engagement, influence, and the distinct dynamics of the digital environment concerning religious experiences and practices. Through this focused approach, the study seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform strategies for effectively reaching and engaging young people in matters of faith and spirituality through social media platforms.

Future Research Directions: The study will provide a foundation for further research and exploration of social media evangelism, allowing for the identification of new research questions, emerging trends, and areas for further investigation. It will inspire scholars and researchers to delve deeper into the complex interplay between social media, religious communication, and the youth population.

Overall, this study aims to offer valuable insights and evidence-based recommendations, contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of social media in evangelizing the youth population. By doing so, it seeks to empower the Seventh-day Adventist Church to effectively engage and inspire the younger generation in matters of faith and spirituality. Through this research, the church can enhance its

outreach efforts and adapt to the evolving communication landscape, ultimately fostering stronger connections with youth and facilitating their spiritual growth.

It will finally provide the Seventh-day Adventist Church especially Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church with an effective program to evangelize other youth using the various social media platforms.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF YOUTH IN MISSION

The Bible contains a lot of stories about youth who were used by God to accomplish various tasks. This chapter will show that there is a strong biblical foundation for involving the youth in ministry.

This chapter will scrutinize the varied terminology used to describe youth in both the Old and New Testaments. It will delve into the depiction of youth who played pivotal roles in evangelistic endeavours throughout the Bible. Furthermore, it will culminate in an exploration of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, aiming to discern the specific roles undertaken by youth during the church's formative period. Through this comprehensive examination, the chapter seeks to illuminate the significance of youth in biblical narratives and within the Seventh-day Adventist tradition, providing valuable insights into their roles and contributions.

Definition of Youth in the Bible

An examination of the biblical terminology employed to characterize youth reveals patterns that can aid in comprehending youth and youth ministry. Consequently, a concise analysis of the words utilized to designate youth in the two primary biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek, along with their contextual usage, is provided below. While several terms exist in these languages to represent youth, the focus of this study will be on the two most commonly used: "*na'ar*" in Hebrew and "*neos*," "*neanias*," and "*neaniskos*" in Greek.

Na'ar (נַעַר)

The majority of descriptions for youth in the Old Testament stem from the Hebrew word “*na'ar*,” which translates to youth, lad, retainer, or young man, and appears approximately 240 times throughout the text. This term is particularly prevalent in the books of Moses and the historical books of the Old Testament.

In general, “*na'ar*” refers to a young man who has reached marriageable age and remains unmarried.¹ Typically, “*na'ar*” implies an individual around the age of twenty, as this is commonly considered the transition point from youth to adulthood.² Most of the young men who were used in the bible were referred to as *na'ar*.

The word was used for the men who were sent to spy on the city of Jericho before the destruction of the city (Josh 6:23).³ These were very smart and crafty men who knew what to look for during these kinds of trips—young men who were also used as armour bearers were also referred to as *na'ar*. Abimelech’s armour-bearer who he asked to kill him before people said a woman had killed him (Judg 9:54). Jonathan also used a young man as an armour-bearer.

Na'ar can also mean servant or an attendant in the Old Testament.⁴ *Na'ar* was used for Purah, Gideon’s servant who God asked him to go to the camp of the Midianites at night (Judg 7:9-11). Purah might have been a brave warrior who is

¹ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words (EDBW)* (1985), s.v. “Youth.”

² Ernst Jenni, “Youth,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible (IDB)*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 4:937.

³ Bible references are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise stated.

⁴ Vine, *EDBW*, s.v. “Youth.”

fearless and thus could protect Gideon on this night trip. Indeed, a "*na'ar*" could even offer counsel to the king, as exemplified by Ahasuerus' attendants who advised him to search for young virgins. (Esth 2:2). These contexts illustrate that the term "*na'ar*" as "attendant" or "servant" does not imply a "slave" or someone performing menial tasks, but rather signifies a respected young individual capable of fulfilling diverse duties and responsibilities. Such individuals were utilized by God in various significant capacities and were esteemed by all.⁵

The word was also used to refer to a "youth" someone who is still learning from the elderly and not yet grown up to take up certain tasks about adults. Gideon's first son, Jether was referred to as a youth (Judg 8:20) who was not old enough to draw a sword and kill Zebah and Zalmuna although he was part of Gideon's army.

Na'ar could also refer to trusted assistants who had been trained to become leaders as in the case of Joshua when he was serving as an assistant to Moses (Num 11:28). Joshua was a very diligent and faithful assistant to Moses, and he took up the mantle of leadership after the death of Moses (Josh 1:1).

Additionally, "*na'ar*" also served in the temple. Typically, those who served in the house of the Lord commenced their duties at the age of twenty, as indicated in 1 Chronicles 23:24. This aligns with the appointment of Levites who were tasked with ministering before the ark of the Lord, commemorating, thanking, and praising the Lord God of Israel, as described in 1 Chronicles 8:4.

From the discussion of the meaning of *na'ar* above it can be realized that the word *na'ar* was a respectable individual who worked in all facets of the Hebrew

⁵ John MacDonald, "The "Naar" In Israelite Society," *Bible and Spade (First Run)* BSP 06:1 (Winter 1977).

community and were also under training to become reliable adults. They were brave and very humble and respected by all individuals.

Neos

Neos can mean recently born, young, youthful, young man, an attendant, younger by birth and it occurs about 24 times in the New Testament.⁶

The apostle Paul advises Timothy not to let anyone disregard or underestimate his youth in 1 Timothy 4:11, employing the word "neos." Conversely, in Titus 2:4, the word "*neos*" is used to denote young women in the context of marriage, emphasizing the importance of teaching them to be sober, to love their husbands, and to love their children. "*Neos*" was also used when Paul was exhorting young men to be sober-minded, living an incorruptible life in Titus 2:6-7.

Neanias

"*Neanias*," another term used to depict youth in the New Testament, is only found in the book of Acts. It is used to describe Saul before his conversion to Paul during the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:58. Additionally, it is used for the young man Eutychus who fell from the window in Acts 20:9.

Neaniskos

This is yet another term used in the New Testament to signify a young man or youth. It was used for the rich young man who approached Jesus to inquire about the good deeds necessary to inherit eternal life in Matthew 19:20. "*Neaniskos*" was also employed for the young man whom Jesus raised from the dead at the entrance of Nain.

⁶ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Eerdmans, 1964), s.v. "*Neos*."

Methodology

A structured questionnaire to assess the effectiveness and reach of social media evangelism among the youth population was designed. The question was administered to members of Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Data was collected on participants' engagement with religious content on social media, their beliefs, values, behaviours, and perceived impact of social media evangelism. Data from the survey was analyzed to determine the effectiveness of social media evangelism and examine correlations between variables.

From the results of the survey, an evangelistic program was designed for the members of Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church to reach out to other youth. The program was implemented and then evaluated.

Biblical Foundation for Youth in Evangelism

In both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, several theological doctrines underpin the practice of youth evangelism.

Old Testament

Covenant Relationship. The Old Testament highlights God's covenantal relationship with His people. This covenant extends to all generations, including the youth, emphasizing their inclusion in God's redemptive plan (Deut 29:14-15).

Education and Instruction. The Old Testament emphasizes the importance of teaching God's commandments diligently to the younger generation (Deut 6:6-7). This underscores the role of adults in mentoring and instructing youth in matters of faith.

Passing on the Faith. The Old Testament frequently instructs parents and elders to pass on their faith to the next generation (Ps 78:4). This includes sharing stories of God's faithfulness and teaching youth to obey His commands.

Prophetic Call. Throughout the Old Testament, we see examples of young individuals being called by God to prophetic ministry, such as Samuel (1 Sam 3) and Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-10). This highlights the potential for youth to play significant roles in God's work.

New Testament

Great Commission. In the New Testament, Jesus issues the Great Commission to His disciples, instructing them to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18-20). This doctrine highlights the responsibility of all Christians, including youths, to share the Gospel and make disciples worldwide. It emphasizes the

significance of evangelism as a core mission of the Church, calling believers of all ages to actively participate in spreading the message of salvation.

Youthful Discipleship. Jesus welcomed children and young people and emphasized the importance of childlike faith (Matt 19:14, Mark 10:14). This suggests that youth are not only recipients of the Gospel but also potential disciples and evangelists themselves. Youth evangelism is often grounded in the concept of discipleship, which involves not only sharing the Gospel but also nurturing young believers in their faith journey. This approach emphasizes ongoing mentorship, teaching, and spiritual growth.

Empowerment by the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, we see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, empowering believers of all ages to proclaim the Gospel boldly. This demonstrates that youth are equipped by the Spirit for evangelistic ministry.

Fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 lists the fruit of the Spirit, including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These qualities are essential for effective evangelism, including outreach to the youth.

Gifts of the Spirit. The doctrine of spiritual gifts, as described in passages like 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, teaches that God equips believers, including youths, with specific gifts and talents for ministry. Youth evangelism frequently entails assisting young individuals in recognizing and cultivating their spiritual gifts for impactful service

Incarnational Ministry. This doctrine emphasizes imitating the example of Jesus Christ, who incarnated Himself among humanity. It teaches that effective

evangelism involves embodying the love, compassion, and teachings of Christ in tangible ways, particularly within the context of relationships with young people.

Missional Theology. Missional theology underscores that the Church's central objective is to participate in God's mission of redemption and reconciliation in the world. Within this theological framework, youth evangelism is seen as a crucial element of God's broader mission, inviting young individuals to play an active role in advancing the kingdom of God.

Kingdom of God. The doctrine of the Kingdom of God emphasizes the present and future reign of God in the world. Youth evangelism is understood as inviting young people to become citizens of God's kingdom, living according to its values and principles.

Eschatology. Eschatological doctrines, which concern the study of the end times and the ultimate destiny of humanity, often shape youth evangelism efforts by highlighting the urgency of sharing the Gospel in light of the impending return of Christ.

These theological doctrines provide a foundation for understanding and engaging in youth evangelism, guiding Christian communities in their efforts to reach and disciple young people with the message of salvation.

Joseph in Egypt

The bible in the thirty seventh chapter of Genesis suggests that Joseph was about seventeen years of age when he was sold into slavery by his brothers. This age indicate Joseph went to Egypt as a youth.

Joseph was sent on an errand to see whether all was well with his brothers and report to his father. Nevertheless, this task turned out to be God's summons to Joseph to embark on a special mission to Egypt. Joseph was an upright person right from

infancy. The bible reports of him reporting his brothers' bad deeds to his father when they were away tending the sheep (Gen 37:2). His life in Potiphar's house was noteworthy. The bible repeatedly states that, the Lord was with Joseph and everything he did was blessed. This was recognized by his master who then promoted him to be a steward of his household from a household servant (Gen 39:3-4).

The story of Joseph in Egypt in the Bible offers several theological doctrines associated with youth evangelism.

The narrative of Joseph exemplifies God's sovereignty and providential care over His people, even amid adversity. Despite being sold into slavery and enduring numerous trials, Joseph remained steadfast in his faithfulness to God, eventually ascending to a position of authority and influence in Egypt (Gen 37-50). This doctrine instills in youth the belief that God is continuously active in their lives, guiding and directing them even through challenging situations.

Joseph's unwavering faithfulness to God, even in the midst of trials and temptations, serves as a powerful example for young people. Despite facing betrayal, false accusations, and imprisonment, Joseph remained steadfast in his commitment to God's principles (Gen 39:7-12). This doctrine emphasizes the importance of integrity and perseverance in youth evangelism, even in the face of opposition.

The story of Joseph also highlights the themes of redemption and forgiveness. After being reconciled with his brothers who had betrayed him, Joseph demonstrated grace and forgiveness, recognizing God's providential purposes in his suffering (Gen 45:4-8). This doctrine teaches youth the importance of extending grace and forgiveness to others, even those who have wronged them, as a witness to God's transformative love.

Joseph's ability to interpret dreams and discern God's purposes for the future underscores the importance of prophetic vision in youth evangelism. Through his gift of interpretation, Joseph was able to provide guidance and direction to others, including Pharaoh and the people of Egypt, ultimately leading to their salvation from famine (Gen 41:14-32). This doctrine encourages youth to seek God's wisdom and guidance in sharing the message of salvation with others.

Overall, the story of Joseph in Egypt offers timeless lessons and theological doctrines that can inspire and empower young people to engage in evangelism and ministry, trusting in God's providence, faithfulness, redemption, and prophetic vision.

Esther

The story of Esther in the Old Testament also describes another brave youth in mission. Esther was described as one of the young virgins who were brought together into the king's harem to compete for the throne of Queen.

The Bible provides limited insight into Esther's character, describing her as exceptionally beautiful (Esth 2:7) and obedient (Esth 2:10). She appears to possess a docile and cooperative demeanour, swiftly earning favour with the chief eunuch, Hegai. When her opportunity arrives to spend the night with the king, she captures his affection, leading to her elevation to the position of queen.

The story of Esther serves as a powerful reminder of the individuals whom God can employ in His mission. Esther, a young, orphaned, and exiled female, would have seemed an unlikely leader in the ancient context. Her sole qualification appeared to be winning a beauty contest. Yet, she became part of a lineage of improbable heroes in Israel's history. Her involvement in God's plan illustrates how He works through those considered of low esteem, including the youth.

Esther's circumstances were particularly challenging. As a woman and a member of a perpetually subordinate population, she faced additional obstacles. Being an orphan further diminished her societal standing, rendering her position precarious in Jewish society and the wider diaspora. Without inherent power, Esther navigated among the influential to fulfil her role in God's divine plan.

Esther's courage and determination ultimately led to the conversion of many Persians to Judaism (Esth 8:17), demonstrating the profound impact that individuals, despite their perceived limitations, can have in furthering God's purposes.

The narrative of Esther showcases God's providential care and guidance over His people, even amidst challenging circumstances. Despite the absence of direct mention of God in the book, His presence and sovereignty are unmistakable throughout the story. Esther's ascent to the position of queen of Persia and her pivotal role in rescuing the Jewish community from annihilation serve as clear demonstrations of God's providence and intervention behind the scenes (Esth 2:17; 4:14). This doctrine teaches young people that God is actively involved in their lives and can use them to fulfil His purposes, even in seemingly unlikely circumstances.

Esther's courage and boldness in approaching King Xerxes to intercede on behalf of her people exemplify the importance of courage in youth evangelism. Despite the risks involved, Esther displayed remarkable courage and selflessness by risking her own life to advocate for the welfare of her people (Esther 4:16). This doctrine encourages young people to step out in faith and boldly proclaim the message of salvation, trusting in God's strength and guidance.

The story of Esther underscores the power of prayer in bringing about God's purposes. Before approaching the king, Esther called for fasting and prayer among the Jewish people, seeking God's favour and intervention (Esth 4:16). This doctrine

emphasizes the importance of prayer in youth evangelism, encouraging young people to seek God's guidance and empowerment through prayer as they engage in sharing the gospel with others.

Mordecai's admonition to Esther to fulfil her role as queen and advocate for her people highlights the importance of faithfulness to God's commands in youth evangelism (Esth 4:13-14). Mordecai reminded Esther that her position of influence was not merely for her own benefit but for the welfare of the Jewish people. This doctrine challenges young people to faithfully steward the opportunities and resources God has given them for the purpose of advancing His kingdom and sharing the gospel with others.

The story of Esther in the Bible offers timeless lessons and theological doctrines that can inspire and equip young people to engage in evangelism and ministry, trusting in God's providence, courage, prayer, and faithfulness to His commands.

The Young Girl at Naaman's House

The servant girl mentioned in 2 Kings 5 receives little focus in the text, yet the term used for her suggests she was a young virgin, placing her in the youth category. The cultural context highlights her gender, status as a servant, and position in society as a captive. Despite her circumstances, her faith leads her master to find healing and ultimately believe in Yahweh, the God of Israel (2 Kgs 5:17). This portrayal emphasizes that God's mission transcends individual circumstances and demonstrates His impartiality.

The young Israelite girl, taken captive and serving in Naaman's household, displayed unwavering fidelity to her God despite her adversity. Instead of harbouring bitterness, she exhibited compassion and concern for Naaman's well-being by

recommending that he seek healing from the prophet Elisha in Israel (2 Kgs 5:3). This doctrine imparts to young people the importance of maintaining faithfulness to God and His purposes, even in trying circumstances, and seizing every opportunity to share the message of hope and redemption with others.

Despite her lowly status as a servant, the young girl's witness had a significant impact on Naaman and ultimately led to his healing and conversion. Her humble and gentle demeanour, coupled with her sincere concern for Naaman's well-being, served as a powerful testimony to the transformative power of God (2 Kgs 5:3-4). This doctrine emphasizes the importance of humility and authenticity in youth evangelism, encouraging young people to let their lives reflect the love and grace of Christ in all they do.

The story of the young girl at Naaman's house highlights God's desire for the salvation of all people, regardless of their nationality or social status. Naaman, a commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a foreigner and a worshiper of false gods, yet God extended His grace and healing to him through the prophet Elisha (2 Kgs 5:1-14). This doctrine challenges young people to recognize the universal scope of God's redemptive plan and to share the gospel with people from all walks of life, trusting in God's power to transform hearts and lives.

The young girl's simple act of kindness and compassion towards Naaman had far-reaching implications, leading to his physical healing and spiritual transformation. This doctrine underscores the significance of small acts of kindness and love in youth evangelism, reminding young people that even the smallest gestures can have a profound impact on others and open doors for sharing the gospel.

The story of the young girl at Naaman's house serves as a powerful example of how youth can play a vital role in advancing God's kingdom through their witness,

humility, and compassion. It teaches young people timeless theological truths about faithfulness, humility, the universality of God's salvation, and the power of simple acts of kindness in sharing the gospel with others.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

The narrative of Daniel and his companions in Babylon provides enduring lessons on faithfulness and mission that resonate across generations. Despite being teenagers taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and his friends exemplified unwavering faith. This steadfastness allowed them to be instruments in God's hands, serving as witnesses for His mission.

From their decision to abstain from the food provided at the King's table (Dan 1:8) to Daniel's interpretation of the King's dream (Dan 2) and their refusal to bow before the King's image, followed by their miraculous deliverance from the fiery furnace, God consistently demonstrated His care for Daniel and his companions. Through these events, God showcased His power before pagans who revered only their idols.

In a foreign land rich with knowledge, philosophy, and theology, these four Hebrew youths served as instruments of God's mission. Their remarkable experiences serve as a testament to true stewardship in a foreign land where choices are limited. Despite the challenges they faced, they remained steadfast in their faith and commitment to God's principles. Indeed, the faith of Daniel and his companions was unwavering even in the face of adversity and exile in Babylon. They understood that their lives were dependent entirely on God, the same God whom their forefathers had worshipped. This steadfast faith guided them through various trials and challenges, ultimately leading to their remarkable witness and testimony in the Babylonian court.

Absolutely, the upbringing and spiritual nurturing of young people play a crucial role in their faith formation and ability to withstand challenges. Just as the parents of Daniel and his companions provided a solid foundation of faith through daily religious instruction, modern parents and the church have a responsibility to instill spiritual values and teachings in the youth. By consistently dwelling on God's goodness, recounting His miracles, and emphasizing His love, both parents and the church can help shape the spiritual identity and resilience of young people.

Daniel and his friends demonstrated unwavering faithfulness and conviction in their commitment to God, even in the face of adversity and persecution. Despite being taken captive and placed in a foreign land where they were exposed to idolatry and pagan customs, they remained steadfast in their devotion to God and refused to compromise their beliefs (Dan 1:8-16; 3:16-18; 6:10). This doctrine teaches young people the importance of standing firm in their faith and remaining true to God's principles, regardless of the pressures and temptations they may encounter.

Throughout the story of Daniel and his friends, God demonstrated His faithfulness in protecting and providing for them in miraculous ways. When faced with life-threatening situations such as being thrown into a fiery furnace and a den of lions, God intervened and delivered them unharmed, showcasing His power and sovereignty (Dan 3:19-30; 6:16-23). This doctrine reassures young people of God's unfailing protection and provision in the midst of trials and challenges, encouraging them to trust in His promises and rely on His strength.

Despite their young age and minority status in a foreign land, Daniel and his friends exerted a significant influence on those around them through their exemplary character and faithful witness. Their integrity, wisdom, and devotion to God attracted the attention of kings and officials, leading to opportunities to share their faith and

testify to God's greatness (Dan 2:46-49; 3:28-30; 6:25-27). This doctrine highlights the power of positive influence and personal testimony in youth evangelism, urging young people to live lives that reflect the love and truth of Christ in order to impact others for His kingdom.

Throughout their experiences, Daniel and his friends relied on God's guidance and revelation to navigate difficult situations and interpret dreams and visions. God granted them wisdom and insight beyond their years, enabling them to discern spiritual truths and interpret prophetic messages that ultimately glorified Him (Dan 1:17-20; 2:19-23; 5:12-16). This doctrine underscores the importance of seeking God's wisdom and direction in youth evangelism, encouraging young people to cultivate a close relationship with Him through prayer, study of His Word, and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Overall, the story of Daniel and his friends provides valuable insights into the theological principles of faithfulness, God's protection and provision, influence and witness, and divine guidance and revelation in the context of youth evangelism. Their exemplary lives serve as timeless examples for young people today, inspiring them to live boldly for Christ and share His message of salvation with courage and conviction.

Jesus

Jesus' early life serves as a profound example of how youth can actively engage in their faith and participate in God's mission. Even at the age of twelve, Jesus demonstrated remarkable wisdom and understanding, engaging with religious scholars in discussions about Scripture. His deep understanding and insightful questions astonished those who heard Him. This narrative underscores the potential for young people to contribute meaningfully to religious discussions and to play an active role in advancing God's kingdom, regardless of their age.

Indeed, Jesus' exceptional knowledge at the age of twelve distinguishes Him in the biblical narrative. His profound understanding of Scripture and ability to engage in deep discussions with religious scholars demonstrated wisdom beyond His years. This extraordinary knowledge foreshadowed His divine nature and mission, setting Him apart as the Son of God.⁷ Contemporary literature often reflects on the childhood experiences of significant Old Testament figures, attributing to them an exceptional understanding of the law, teaching abilities, and profound wisdom. These reflections often project back onto their childhoods the attributes and achievements they displayed later in life, suggesting that their formative years played a crucial role in shaping their character and abilities.⁸

The early life of Jesus Christ, as depicted in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, offers several theological doctrines associated with youth evangelism:

The doctrine of the Incarnation, which teaches that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became flesh and dwelt among humanity (John 1:14), is central to the story of Jesus' birth. His incarnation as a human infant demonstrates God's desire to intimately relate to humanity and communicate His message of salvation in a tangible and relatable way. This doctrine emphasizes the importance of incarnational ministry in youth evangelism, encouraging young people to embody the love, compassion, and humility of Christ as they engage with others.

From His infancy, Jesus was recognized as the promised Messiah who came to fulfil God's redemptive plan for humanity (Matt 1:21; Luke 2:11). His birth was

⁷ Henk J. de Jonge, "Sonship, Worship, Infancy: Luke II.41–51a," *NTS* 24 (1978), 354.

⁸ Moses is attributed with superior understanding as a child (Josephus, *Ant.* 2.230; Philo, *Moses* 1.21); Samuel is said to have commenced prophesying at age 12 (Josephus, *Ant.* 5.348). Josephus says of himself that at age 14 he had acquired a knowledge of the law superior to that of the high priests and other 'principal men of the city' (*Vita* 9). Cf. *Jub.* 11.18–24 (of Abraham) and *Sus* 45–50 (of Daniel).

heralded by angelic announcements and prophetic declarations, underscoring His missional calling to proclaim the kingdom of God and bring salvation to all people (Luke 2:10-11). This doctrine highlights the missional nature of youth evangelism, reminding young people of their role in sharing the gospel message and participating in God's mission of reconciliation and restoration.

The early life of Jesus exemplifies the importance of faithful obedience to God's will and purpose. Despite facing various challenges and threats to His life, Jesus remained obedient to His heavenly Father, trusting in His divine guidance and sovereignty (Matt 2:13-23; Luke 2:39-52). His submission to the authority of God's Word and His earthly parents serves as a model for young people in their journey of discipleship and evangelism, urging them to obey God's commands and follow His leading even in difficult circumstances.

The events surrounding Jesus' birth and childhood fulfil numerous Old Testament prophecies, affirming His identity as the promised Messiah (Matt 1:22-23; 2:5-6, 15, 23; Luke 1:31-33; 2:25-32). These prophecies underscore the continuity of God's redemptive plan throughout history and validate Jesus' authority as the Savior of the world. This doctrine emphasizes the importance of understanding and proclaiming the fulfilment of biblical prophecy in youth evangelism, demonstrating the credibility and reliability of Scripture in pointing to Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of God's promises.

The story of Jesus' early life highlights the significance of personal encounters with Him as a means of encountering God's grace and salvation. Individuals such as the shepherds, the Magi, and Simeon and Anna experienced firsthand the presence and power of Jesus, leading them to worship and proclaim His greatness (Luke 2:8-20; Matt 2:1-12; Luke 2:25-38). This doctrine emphasizes the transformative impact

of encountering Jesus personally in youth evangelism, inviting young people to encounter Christ in a meaningful way and respond to His invitation of discipleship and salvation.

In summary, the early life of Jesus Christ offers theological doctrines such as the Incarnation, missional calling, faithful obedience, prophetic fulfilment, and personal encounter that are foundational to youth evangelism. These doctrines provide young people with a framework for understanding and sharing the gospel message, empowering them to participate in God's redemptive work in the world.

The Twelve Disciples

The twelve disciples who carried on the evangelistic work of Jesus Christ to the rest of the world after Jesus ascended to heaven were picked by Jesus at their youthful age. The twelve disciples were picked by Jesus when he started his ministries at the age of thirty. Although the bible did not state the ages of the disciples but there are indicators in the bible and the social life of the Jews at that time that could indicate that most of them might have been younger than Jesus when they were picked.

Firstly, the disciples referred to Jesus as 'Rabbi' (Mark 9:5, John 1:38, 6:25 etc). Rabbi means a spiritual leader or religious teacher in Judaism.⁹ In the social context of the Jews where due respect and obedience were always accorded the eldest, it can be concluded that Jesus might have been older than the disciples to be accorded that respect.

Secondly, in Mathew 10:42, Jesus referred to the disciples as "little ones." The disciples would not have taken it lightly if Jesus was not older than them according to

⁹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (2010), s.v "Rabbi."

the Jewish culture. Peter was the only disciple that was quoted to be married during the period (Matt 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-30; Luke 4:38-39). Most Jewish young men were supposed to be married at an early age that is the time between puberty and age twenty.¹⁰ It can be inferred that most of the disciples were teenagers when Jesus picked them because most of them were not married then.

Jesus' call to the Twelve Disciples emphasizes the importance of responding to God's invitation to follow Him and participate in His mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God (Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11). This doctrine underscores the significance of youth responding to the call to discipleship and engaging in evangelism as a central aspect of their Christian identity and purpose.

Throughout their time with Jesus, the Twelve Disciples received intensive training, mentorship, and empowerment for ministry (Matt 10:1-8; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6). Jesus equipped them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and authority to proclaim the gospel, perform miracles, and make disciples. This doctrine highlights the importance of equipping and training young people for effective evangelism, providing them with the tools and resources needed to share their faith confidently and compellingly.

Before His ascension, Jesus entrusted the Twelve Disciples with the Great Commission, instructing them to go and make disciples of all nations. This commission reiterated in various passages such as Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:46-49, and Acts 1:8, emphasizes the universal mandate for all believers, including young people, to participate in evangelism and disciple-making. It

¹⁰ "Jewish Views on Marriage," Wikipedia, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://en.wikipedia.org>.

highlights the vital role of youth in spreading the gospel to individuals of all demographics, both within their local communities and across the globe.

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to empower and enable the Twelve Disciples to be witnesses for Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). This empowerment by the Holy Spirit equipped the disciples with boldness, wisdom, and spiritual gifts for effective evangelism and ministry. This doctrine emphasizes the essential role of the Holy Spirit in empowering young people for evangelism, enabling them to overcome obstacles, articulate their faith, and bear witness to Christ's transforming power.

The Twelve Disciples exemplify the importance of community and collaboration in evangelism. They worked together, supported one another, and shared their testimonies of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37). This doctrine highlights the value of youth engaging in evangelism within the context of Christian community, where they can receive encouragement, accountability, and mutual support in fulfilling their mission.

In summary, the story of the Twelve Disciples in the Bible provides theological doctrines such as the call to discipleship, equipping and training, commission to evangelize, empowerment by the Holy Spirit, and the importance of community and collaboration that are foundational to youth evangelism. These doctrines inspire and empower young people to respond to God's call, proclaim the gospel boldly, and make disciples for the glory of God's kingdom.

Timothy

Another youth worth mentioning as an example of a youth engaged in evangelism in the New Testament is Timothy. At a very young age Timothy was described as a disciple (Acts 16:1). Timothy was not circumcised because his father

was a Greek. His faith emanated from his grandmother Lois who was a Jew and later accepted the Christian faith with her daughter Eunice. The Apostle Paul acknowledges the sincere faith of Lois which she transmitted to Eunice then to Timothy (2 Tim 1:5).

The New Testament provides extensive documentation of the relationship between Timothy and Paul, particularly in the letters known as the Pastoral Epistles, which include 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. Timothy was a trusted associate of the apostle Paul, and these letters suggest that Timothy held a position of leadership, potentially serving as an elder or overseer within the Christian community.

In 1 Timothy 1:3, Paul refers to Timothy as he leaves him in Ephesus, indicating that Timothy was entrusted with a specific role in the church there. The opening verses of 1 Timothy also suggest that Timothy was serving as an emissary of Paul, tasked with correcting certain issues within the Ephesian church.

Timothy's life exemplifies the principle of being called by God to serve in ministry from a young age. Paul describes Timothy as his "beloved and faithful child in the Lord" (1 Cor 4:17), indicating Timothy's deep commitment to Christ and his calling to ministry. This doctrine underscores the idea that young people can be called by God to participate actively in evangelism and ministry, regardless of their age or experience.

Timothy benefited from the mentorship and guidance of the apostle Paul, who served as his spiritual father and mentor in the faith (1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:22). Paul invested in Timothy's spiritual development, teaching him the Scriptures, imparting spiritual gifts, and entrusting him with significant responsibilities in ministry (2 Tim 1:5; 2:2). This doctrine highlights the importance of older, more experienced believers

coming alongside young people, mentoring them, and equipping them for effective evangelism and leadership in the church.

Timothy's faithfulness and diligence in serving the Lord despite his youth serve as an inspiration to other young believers (1 Tim 4:12). Paul commends Timothy for his genuine faith, sincere love, and steadfastness in ministry, encouraging him to continue in his calling with zeal and commitment (2 Tim 1:5; 2:15). This doctrine emphasizes the importance of young people cultivating a deep and unwavering faith in Christ, remaining faithful to their calling, and persevering in the face of challenges and opposition.

Timothy received the gift of the Holy Spirit, which enabled him to fulfil his ministry with power, boldness, and effectiveness (2 Tim 1:6-7). The Holy Spirit equipped Timothy with spiritual gifts for evangelism, teaching, and shepherding God's people, empowering him to make a significant impact for the kingdom of God. This doctrine highlights the essential role of the Holy Spirit in empowering young people for evangelism, enabling them to proclaim the gospel with conviction and authority.

Paul exhorted Timothy to hold fast to sound doctrine, faithfully teaching and defending the truth of God's Word (1 Tim 1:3-4; 6:20; 2 Tim 2:15). Timothy's commitment to sound doctrine ensured the preservation of the gospel message and safeguarded the church against false teaching and deception. This doctrine emphasizes the importance of young people grounding their faith in the truth of Scripture, accurately interpreting and applying God's Word, and boldly proclaiming the gospel message to others.

In summary, the story of Timothy in the Bible provides theological doctrines such as the call to ministry, mentorship and discipleship, faithfulness and diligence,

empowerment by the Holy Spirit, and commitment to sound doctrine that are foundational to youth evangelism. These doctrines serve as guiding principles for young believers as they seek to fulfil their calling and make a meaningful impact for the kingdom of God.

John Mark

John Mark is indeed mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as an assistant who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journeys. However, he experienced a significant setback in his spiritual journey, which led to a period of backsliding. This incident caused a division between Paul and Barnabas, highlighting the challenges and conflicts that can arise even among great men of God due to human fallibility and differing perspectives.

Indeed, Paul's perspective toward John Mark seems to have evolved over time. In Colossians 4:10, written during Paul's imprisonment, he mentions that Mark is with him and encourages the Colossian church to welcome him. Furthermore, in 2 Timothy 4:11, as Paul nears the end of his life, he requests Timothy to bring Mark with him because "he is very useful to me for ministry." These passages suggest a reconciliation and a recognition of Mark's value and usefulness in ministry by Paul.

John Mark's initial involvement in missionary work faced challenges, he later becomes a valued companion in Paul's ministry. His association with the writing of the Gospel of Mark further highlights his significant contribution to the early Christian movement.¹¹

¹¹ "John Mark," Wikipedia, accessed January 18, 2024, <https://en.wikipedia.org>.

John Mark's association with prominent figures in the early Christian church, such as Barnabas and the Apostle Peter, illustrates the importance of discipleship and mentorship in nurturing young believers for effective ministry (Acts 12:25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; 1 Pet 5:13). This doctrine emphasizes the role of experienced mentors in guiding and equipping young people for evangelism, providing them with spiritual guidance, support, and encouragement as they grow in their faith and ministry.

Despite his youthfulness, John Mark actively participated in missionary endeavours alongside seasoned missionaries like Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:5). While he initially accompanied them on their missionary journey, he later returned home, possibly due to personal reasons or challenges faced in the ministry (Acts 13:13). However, he continued to serve in various capacities, such as assisting Barnabas and later accompanying Peter, demonstrating that youth can contribute meaningfully to evangelism and ministry despite their age and experience. This doctrine encourages young people to seize opportunities for service and involvement in evangelistic activities, recognizing their potential to make a significant impact for God's kingdom.

John Mark's temporary departure from the missionary journey led to a conflict between Paul and Barnabas regarding his reliability (Acts 15:36-41). However, later references in Paul's writings indicate that John Mark was reconciled with Paul and became a valued co-worker in ministry (Col 4:10; Phlm 1:24; 2 Tim 4:11). This narrative highlights the themes of redemption and restoration, illustrating God's grace in giving second chances and using imperfect individuals for His purposes. It emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, reconciliation, and perseverance in youth

evangelism, acknowledging that setbacks and failures are not barriers to God's redemptive work but opportunities for growth and renewal.

John Mark's eventual restoration and fruitful ministry underscore the virtues of faithfulness and endurance in youth evangelism (2 Tim 4:11). Despite facing challenges and setbacks, John Mark remained committed to his calling and continued to serve in ministry, ultimately earning commendation from Paul for his usefulness in ministry. This doctrine encourages young evangelists to persevere in their faith and ministry, trusting in God's faithfulness and relying on His strength to overcome obstacles and fulfil their calling.

In summary, the story of John Mark in the Bible highlights theological doctrines such as discipleship and mentorship, opportunities for service, redemption and restoration, and faithfulness and endurance that are associated with youth evangelism. These doctrines inspire and equip young believers to actively engage in evangelism, grow in their faith, and fulfil their God-given calling to proclaim the gospel to the world.

Youth Evangelism in the Spirit of Prophecy

Ellen G. White stands out as a prominent figure in the realm of literature focused on youth theology, training, and readiness for active service. She was called to the prophetic role at the young age of seventeen in December 1844, marking the beginning of her influential contributions to this field.¹² Ellen G. White dedicated seventy years of service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, playing a pioneering role in its establishment. Her involvement in this project holds significance as she consistently stressed the importance of youth involvement within both the church and

¹² Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White - A Brief Biography," accessed January 5, 2024, <https://whiteestate.org/about/egwbio/#faq3307d848-63ca-4183-b188-6dde31ef4507>.

broader society. Through her literary works, notably "Messages to Young People," she showcased a profound understanding of youth perspectives and the theological aspects of youth ministry. White advocated for an incarnational approach, which she deemed crucial for the salvation of young individuals. Echoing her sentiments in "Ministry of Healing," she asserted that "Christ's method alone will bring genuine success in reaching people."¹³

Jesus engaged with individuals authentically, showing genuine concern for their welfare. He demonstrated empathy, addressed their needs, and earned their trust. Subsequently, he extended the invitation to "Follow Me," inviting them into a deeper relationship and journey with Him.¹⁴ The foundation of effective youth ministry lies in mirroring the intentional steps taken by Jesus to connect with and impact the lives of those He encountered. In concrete terms, Jesus engaged in social interactions, expressed empathy, served others, provided security, and ultimately offered salvation to those He reached out to. Understanding and embodying this approach is crucial for effectively ministering to young people and following the example set by Jesus.

Ellen White was deeply acquainted with incarnational ministry, which underscores the significance of following Christ's example of selfless service to others. In her book "The Desire of Ages," White delves into the concept of Incarnational Ministry, describing it as "the work of God in humanity." This highlights the divine presence and action within human lives, reflecting the essence of Christ's mission to embody God's love and compassion in the world.¹⁵

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 143.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2002), 511.

Ellen White poses a thought-provoking question and responds with insightful clarity: Why should investing effort in the youth within our communities be regarded as a paramount form of missionary work? It necessitates utmost sensitivity, thoughtful deliberation, and sincere prayer for divine guidance.

In her book "Gospel Workers," White emphasizes that youth are prime targets for Satan's attacks. Nevertheless, she maintains that extending kindness, showing courtesy, and offering genuine sympathy, all stemming from a heart overflowing with love for Jesus, can not only win their confidence but also safeguard them from falling into many of the enemy's traps. White stresses the necessity for deeper understanding of how to engage with youth and emphasizes the importance of earnest prayer for wisdom in guiding young minds. She underscores the importance of empathizing with youth in their experiences, whether in their joys, sorrows, struggles, or triumphs.

White advocates for meeting youth where they are, affirming that this is essential to retaining their interest and involvement. She emphasizes the responsibility of believers to make the journey to heaven enticing and welcoming, reminding them of God's expectation in this regard.¹⁶

Youth ministry based on this model seeks to meet young individuals where they are in their lives and offer them pastoral support. In this approach, youth leaders are not only seen as spiritual mentors but also as counsellors and companions, accompanying young people as they navigate their journey of faith.

She emphasizes the significance of dedicating quality time and attention to young individuals if the goal is to guide them toward the Lord and cultivate the nurturing environment crucial for their spiritual development. Simply offering

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1892), 207-212.

occasional encouragement or casual acknowledgment is inadequate; what's needed is consistent involvement and authentic concern. Working with youth demands diligent, prayerful, and thoughtful effort. Only those who possess hearts brimming with love and empathy can effectively connect with seemingly apathetic or disengaged young people.

Reaching out to our youth cannot be left to random chance; it requires planning and deliberate efforts because they are valuable and deserve the utmost care. The fundamental problem impeding effective and meaningful youth ministry, as pinpointed in the book "Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students," stems from the insufficient attention given to our children and youth. Their Christian development has been neglected because church members have failed to regard them with compassion and empathy, nor have they sought to facilitate their spiritual advancement.¹⁷

Taking Jesus as our example, we are summoned to a ministry that prioritizes personal connection and relationship-building, empowering young individuals to engage in outreach to their peers and beyond. This approach firmly rejects any pursuit of power for self-interest, emphasizing instead a commitment to selfless service. Jesus embodied this principle when he taught, "whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt 20:26-28).

When the church fully understands its priorities and prioritizes youth ministry, it will exemplify the profound idea expressed in the statement: "The work that lies

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), 41.

next to our church members is to become interested in our youth; for they need kindness, patience, tenderness... They ought to be those whose hearts are touched by the pitiable situation in which they are placed, and who realize that Satan is working by every conceivable device to draw them into his net." This highlights the crucial significance of demonstrating care, patience, and empathy towards youth, acknowledging the difficulties they encounter and the adversary's efforts to entrap them.¹⁸

Comprehending the significance of the incarnation becomes profound when we fully grasp the immense sacrifice made by the Son of God in descending to a world entrenched in sin for four millennia. He willingly subjected Himself to the risk of temptation by sin, all with the aim of redeeming completely those who turn to God through Him. This act of God assuming human form is recognized as the "mystery of all mysteries," highlighting the incomprehensible depth of God's love and selflessness towards humanity.¹⁹

Conclusion

Ministry to and alongside young people is not only supported by Biblical examples but also has significant precedent. Throughout the Bible, we encounter instances of God using young individuals, including prominent figures such as Joseph, Josiah, Esther, Jeremiah, Mary, John Mark, and Timothy. These examples demonstrate that God works through young people for His purposes. Therefore, if we are to align ourselves with God's will, the church must prioritize engaging youth in His Kingdom and equipping them as disciples.

¹⁸ White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 41.

¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *A Faith to Live By* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1989), 48.

Youth ministry serves as a reflection of the broader emphasis within the church on teaching the Word of God. In an Evangelical Free context, this emphasis is upheld by a well-trained leadership team of laypeople dedicated to effectively teaching the Bible with the goal of nurturing followers of Christ. This model operates within a framework that prioritizes the Bible as the central teaching tool, supplemented by an atmosphere of prayer, praise, and worship music.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Social Media Evangelism and Its Significance

The concept of social media evangelism refers to the use of social media platforms to share and promote religious beliefs, teachings, and values with the aim of engaging and inspiring the youth population.¹ It recognizes the power and influence of social media in shaping communication patterns and information consumption among young people.

Social media evangelism holds significant importance in reaching the youth population due to the following reasons:

Social media platforms have seamlessly integrated into the daily routines of young individuals.² A considerable portion of their time is devoted to engaging with these platforms, where they connect with friends, consume content, and express their opinions. By utilizing social media for evangelism, religious organizations can effectively engage with the youth where they already are, leveraging the widespread usage and reach of these platforms.

¹ Nelson Musonda, "Social Media Evangelism - How to Effectively Use Social Media to Grow Your Ministry," accessed October 4, 2021, <https://www.delmethod.com/blog/social-media-evangelism>.

² T. J. Bocala-Wiedemann, "Social Media as a Tool for Evangelism among Youth and Young Adults," *Great Commission Research Journal* 14, no. 1 (2022): 15-34, <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=gcrj>.

Social media provides interactive and participatory communication channels, allowing for two-way interactions between religious organizations and the youth.³ It enables the sharing of religious messages, teachings, and experiences in a dynamic and engaging manner, fostering a sense of community and dialogue. Through features like comments, likes, shares, and direct messaging, social media evangelism facilitates real-time engagement and feedback, fostering a sense of inclusivity and personal connection.

Social media platforms offer the ability to tailor content based on users' interests, preferences, and demographics.⁴ This allows religious organizations to deliver personalized religious content to the youth, making it more relevant and relatable to their unique experiences and needs. By presenting religious teachings and values in a context that resonates with the youth, social media evangelism can increase their engagement and receptiveness.

Social media can extend the reach of religious messages and content to a wide audience.⁵ Through sharing, retweeting, and reposting, youth can spread religious content within their social networks, potentially reaching individuals who may not have been directly exposed to religious teachings before. The viral aspect of social media can greatly enhance the visibility and effectiveness of social media evangelism initiatives, enabling religious organizations to engage with a broader youth demographic.

³ Bocala-Wiedemann, "Social Media as a Tool for Evangelism among Youth and Young Adults," 15-34.

⁴ S. Joseph Kidder, "Using Social Media for Evangelism," *Ministry*, February 2016, 30, accessed October 4, 2021, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2016/02/using-social-media-for-evangelism>.

⁵ Musonda, "Social Media Evangelism."

Social media platforms provide a rich multimedia environment where religious organizations can share educational resources, inspirational stories, testimonies, and multimedia content such as videos, podcasts, and graphics.⁶ These resources can be easily accessible, engaging, and shareable, enabling the youth to deepen their understanding of faith and spirituality while being inspired and motivated in their spiritual journeys.

Social media evangelism can help bridge the generation gaps between older religious leaders and the youth.⁷ It allows religious organizations to connect with the youth on their terms, using communication styles and platforms that resonate with them. Through social media, religious leaders can demonstrate a willingness to engage with the younger generation, fostering intergenerational dialogue and understanding.

By leveraging the power of social media, religious organizations can overcome traditional barriers and engage the youth population in a meaningful way.⁸ Social media evangelism provides an opportunity to communicate the message of faith, share values, and inspire the youth, fostering a sense of belonging and deeper spiritual connections within religious communities.⁹

⁶ T. Wong, "Digital Storytelling in Religious Education: Research and Practice," *Journal of Religious Education* 64, no. 1 (2016): 78–86.

⁷ Heidi A. Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 45.

⁸ Craig Detweiler, *iGods: How Technology Shapes Our Spiritual and Social Lives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2013), 65.

⁹ Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media*, 112.

Overview of Research Objectives and Importance

The research objectives of studying the impact of social media as a means of evangelizing the youth population encompass several key aspects:

Effectiveness Assessment: The first objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of social media as a tool for evangelizing the youth. This involves examining its reach, engagement, and long-term impact compared to traditional methods of evangelism.

Trisney J. Bocala-Wiedemann's research, titled "Social Media as a Tool for Evangelism among Youth and Young Adults," delves into the utilization of social media platforms for evangelistic purposes, particularly within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹⁰ The research suggests that social media can be an effective platform for evangelism among youth, but its effectiveness may vary based on the prevalent communication channels among youth and the type of content shared. The study also highlights the need for churches and media organizations to stay up to date with communication technology to effectively reach young people.

Another study conducted at Liberty University discusses the potential of social media to be used for creating inspiring faith-based content, practicing godly influence, and developing authentic community, but it also acknowledges the imprudent use of social media among adolescents and young adults.¹¹ The study emphasizes the importance of equipping students to use social media as a tool to positively influence culture, evangelize, and create authentic community.

¹⁰ Bocala-Wiedemann, "Social Media as a Tool for Evangelism among Youth and Young Adults," 15-34.

¹¹ Allen Williams, "Social Media: A Tool for Discipleship" (DMin Thesis, John W. Rawlings School Of Divinity, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia April 2023).

A review published in Spectrum Magazine highlights the potential for churches, media organizations, and digital missionaries to harness social media as a powerful tool for evangelism, particularly targeting young people. The review underscores the importance of tailoring content to address the specific needs and preferences of the audience. It recommends leveraging platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to effectively disseminate evangelistic messages and engage with youth.

Understanding the effectiveness of social media evangelism is crucial for religious organizations to assess the value of their efforts and make informed decisions about resource allocation.

Youth Engagement Factors: The second objective is to identify the factors that contribute to the engagement of young individuals with religious content on social media. This includes exploring the influence of different social media platforms, content formats, and interactive features on youth participation and interest. By understanding these factors, religious organizations can tailor their social media evangelism strategies to effectively capture and maintain the attention of the youth population.

In her work titled "Rethinking Connection: Spirituality, Social Media, and Crisis of Faith in Young Adults," Connie L. Beckham explores the impact of social media, authenticity, and community as key factors influencing youth engagement.¹² Connie L. Beckham's research highlights that social media has expanded the reach, accessibility, and speed of global communication, thereby making religious media more "global" than ever before. Moreover, she emphasizes that social media can

¹² Connie L. Beckham, "Rethinking Connection: Spirituality, Social Media, and Crisis of Faith in Young Adult" (DEdu Thesis, School of Behavioral Sciences Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, 2022).

facilitate the creation of an authentic community and enable the practice of godly influence. However, Beckham also underscores the necessity for responsible and intentional usage of social media to positively impact youth and cultivate genuine community.

Influence and Impact Assessment: The third objective is to examine the potential positive and negative influences of social media evangelism on the beliefs, values, behaviours, and religious experiences of the youth. This involves exploring how social media shapes their religious identity formation, sense of belonging, and overall engagement with faith. Understanding the influence and impact of social media evangelism is important for religious organizations to ensure that their efforts align with positive outcomes and avoid potential pitfalls or unintended consequences.

Social media platforms have become valuable tools for believers to connect and engage in discussions about their spirituality, providing a global reach for religious content.¹³ It can be used to create inspiring faith-based content, practice godly influence, and develop authentic community, which can positively impact the religious experiences of young individuals.¹⁴

Social media evangelism has the potential to positively impact the beliefs, values, behaviours, and religious experiences of young individuals by providing a global reach, inspiring faith-based content, and facilitating youth outreach. However, it also poses challenges such as exposure to harmful influences, imprudent use, and the need to maintain authenticity in religious content. Understanding these influences

¹³ Bocala-Wiedemann, "Social Media as a Tool for Evangelism among Youth and Young Adults," 15-34.

¹⁴ Williams, "Social Media: A Tool for Discipleship."

is crucial for effectively utilizing social media as a tool for evangelizing and engaging youth with religious content.

Challenges and Limitations Identification: The fourth objective is to identify the challenges and limitations faced by religious organizations when using social media for evangelizing the youth. This includes addressing issues such as authenticity, ethical considerations, information overload, and algorithmic biases. Wiedemann identifies authenticity, opposing beliefs and lack of training as some of the challenges and limitations of using social media as a means of evangelizing the youth.¹⁵

Nelson Musonda also identifies that Social media evangelism may lack the personal connection and accountability that traditional forms of evangelism provide.¹⁶ In his work, Allen William also identifies Imprudent Use as a challenge in using Social media as an evangelistic method. He alludes that Social media can be addictive and may conceal a plethora of negative influences, which can negatively impact young individuals' religious beliefs and practices.¹⁷

By understanding these challenges, religious organizations can develop strategies and approaches to overcome obstacles and maximize the effectiveness of their social media evangelism efforts.

The importance of studying this topic lies in its relevance to the evolving landscape of religious communication and youth engagement. Social media has transformed the way people interact, access information, and form their identities, particularly among the youth population. By studying the impact of social media as a

¹⁵ Bocala-Wiedemann, "Social Media as a Tool for Evangelism among Youth and Young Adults," 15-34.

¹⁶ Musonda, "Social Media Evangelism."

¹⁷ Williams, "Social Media: A Tool for Discipleship."

means of evangelizing the youth, religious organizations can adapt their outreach strategies to effectively engage and inspire young individuals in matters of faith and spirituality.

Understanding the effectiveness, engagement factors, and potential influences of social media evangelism on the youth population allows religious organizations to develop informed strategies, create relevant content, and foster meaningful connections with the younger generation. Additionally, studying the challenges and limitations associated with social media evangelism helps religious organizations navigate the digital landscape responsibly and ethically, ensuring the positive impact of their efforts on the youth population.

By addressing these research objectives, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on social media evangelism, provide evidence-based insights, and equip religious organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders with valuable information and recommendations for effectively utilizing social media as a means of evangelizing the youth.

Social Media and Youth Culture

Social media has become deeply ingrained in youth culture, profoundly impacting how young individuals communicate, interact, and construct their identities. These platforms are now an indispensable aspect of contemporary youth's daily lives, revolutionizing their modes of communication and interaction.

Young people engage with social media in multifaceted ways, driven by factors such as convenience and connectivity. For many, social media usage has become habitual, prompting a constant need to seek and share information with fellow

users. As a result, the urge to access and exchange information via social media platforms has become increasingly pronounced among young adults.¹⁸

Studies by Boyd and Livingstone emphasize that social media provides opportunities for young people to connect with friends, share experiences, and express themselves in new and dynamic ways. These platforms enable constant connectivity, allowing youth to maintain social connections, form new relationships, and engage in real-time communication.¹⁹

Social media plays a significant role in shaping young people's self-presentation and identity formation. Boyd and Ellison argue that platforms such as Facebook and Instagram allow individuals to construct online personas, curate their digital identities, and present themselves to peers and wider audiences²⁰. Through selective sharing and image curation, youth engage in self-presentation practices that shape how they are perceived by others and contribute to the construction of their self-identity.

Social media platforms facilitate social comparison among young people. Marwick and Boyd highlight that youth engage in the comparison of their own lives and achievements with those of their peers, leading to both positive and negative effects on self-esteem and well-being.²¹ Social media influencers and celebrities

¹⁸ C. Lou and S. Yuan, "Influencer Marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media," *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 2019 (1): 58-73.

¹⁹ Danah Boyd, *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 5.

²⁰ Danah Boyd and N. B. Ellison, "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, no. 1 (2007): 210-230.

²¹ Annette Marwick and Danah Boyd, "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience," *New Media & Society* 13, no. 1 (2011): 114-133.

further impact youth culture by shaping trends, preferences, and aspirations. The influence of these online figures can shape young people's behaviors, values, and consumption patterns.

Wang and Edwards, through an online survey, discovered that young people in the United Kingdom extensively utilize prominent social media platforms for socializing and nurturing relationships. Their research also indicated that engaging online via social media can have positive and constructive outcomes for youth.²²

Youth actively participate in creating and sharing content on social media platforms. Ito et al. discuss how young people engage in a participatory culture, generating user-generated content such as videos, memes, and creative productions.²³ This active engagement with social media platforms allows youth to express their creativity, develop digital literacy skills, and contribute to online communities.

Research has shown that Facebook usage is positively correlated with the internalization of social and romantic ideals. Conversely, Instagram usage is associated with the internalization of professional, social, sexual, and romantic ideals. Additionally, Loader noted that social media has become ubiquitous among young people, even for political purposes.

Through platforms like Facebook, youth are actively sharing information, mobilizing, organizing group events, and reshaping political landscapes. However, it's important to note that Facebook does not replace face-to-face interactions; rather, it serves as a platform for organizing such meetings. Furthermore, research suggests that

²² V. Wang and S. Edwards, "Strangers are friends I haven't met yet: A positive approach to young people's use of social media," *Journal of Youth Studies* 19, no. 9 (2016): 1204-1219.

²³ Mizuko Ito et al., *Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out: Kids Living and Learning with New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010).

conversations among young people on social media, particularly regarding facts and values, are detailed, sophisticated, and often contentious.²⁴

Social media platforms provide opportunities for informal learning experiences. Greenhow and Lewin argue that youth engage in online communities, participate in knowledge-sharing networks, and acquire information outside traditional educational settings. Social media platforms also support peer-to-peer learning, collaborative problem-solving, and access to diverse perspectives and resources.²⁵

While social media presents various opportunities, it also poses risks and challenges to youth culture. Lenhart et al. highlight concerns such as cyberbullying, online privacy, and the potential negative effects of excessive screen time.²⁶ Social media's influence on body image, self-esteem, and mental health is also a growing concern.

Social media platforms have transformed communication patterns, self-presentation practices, social influences, learning experiences, and content creation among young people. It is crucial to recognize both the positive and negative

²⁴ G. Kunonga, "Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The reconstruction of a just social order in the light of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Africae Munus*," *Hekima Review* 2015, 52: 17-28.

²⁵ Christine Greenhow and Catheryn Lewin, "Social Media and Education: Reconceptualizing the Boundaries of Formal and Informal Learning," *Learning, Media, and Technology* 41, no. 1 (2016): 6-30.

²⁶ Amanda Lenhart et al., "Teens and Mobile Phones: Exploring Safety Issues as Mobile Phones Become the Communications Hub for American Teens," Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, accessed January 27, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2010/11/09/teens-and-mobile-phones-exploring-safety-issues-as-mobile-phones-become-the-communications-hub-for-american-teens/>.

implications of social media to develop strategies that maximize the benefits while mitigating the risks. Future research should continue to explore the dynamic relationship between social media and youth culture, keeping pace with the evolving landscape of digital technologies and their effects on young people's lives.

Characteristics of the Youth Population and Their Preferences for Social Media Platforms, Content Formats, and Engagement Methods

The youth population's characteristics and preferences for social media platforms, content formats, and engagement methods play a significant role in shaping their interactions and experiences in the digital landscape. Understanding these preferences is essential for religious organizations, educators and communicators seeking to effectively engage with the youth through social media channels. This section explores key research studies and findings that shed light on the characteristics and preferences of the youth in relation to social media usage.

Digital Natives and Mobile-Centric Behavior

The youth population is often referred to as "digital natives" due to their innate familiarity and comfort with digital technologies, including social media platforms. Palfrey and Gasser discuss how this generation is highly proficient in using digital devices and social media platforms.²⁷ They have grown up in an era immersed in digital devices and have adopted a mobile-centric approach to social media usage.²⁸ Mobile devices, especially smartphones, are the primary means of accessing social

²⁷ John Palfrey and Urs Gasser, *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 7.

²⁸ Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, and Purcell, "Teens and Mobile Phones."

media for this demographic, providing instant connectivity and continuous engagement on the go.

Visual Content Preference

Visual content holds strong appeal for the youth population, with platforms emphasizing visual storytelling gaining significant popularity. Instagram, for instance, has become a favourite platform due to its emphasis on photo and video sharing.²⁹ Studies indicate that images and videos resonate more strongly with the youth, as they prefer visually appealing content that is easy to consume and share.³⁰ Social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, which prioritize visual content, have experienced significant popularity among young users.³¹

Short-Form and Snackable Content

Youth audiences are known for their short attention spans, which influence their preference for short-form and easily consumable content. Bite-sized content, such as short videos, memes, and quick posts, aligns with their rapid information consumption habits.³² The brevity of content is vital for retaining their interest in the fast-paced social media environment. Social media platforms like TikTok have

²⁹ Danah Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, no. 1 (2007): 210-230.

³⁰ Sonia Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy, and Self-expression," *New Media & Society* 10, no. 3 (2008): 393-411.

³¹ Sonia Livingstone and Leslie Haddon, *Kids Online: Opportunities and Risks for Children* (Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2009).

³² Sonia Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy, and Self-expression," *New Media & Society* 10, no. 3 (2008): 393-411

capitalized on this preference by providing a platform primarily centered around short-form video content.

Interactive and Participatory Experiences

Engaging the youth effectively requires incorporating interactive and participatory features in social media content. Platforms that offer features like polls, quizzes, challenges, and user-generated content campaigns encourage active engagement. Participatory experiences create a sense of ownership and involvement, fostering deeper connections with the youth.³³ Interactive elements contribute to a more immersive and enjoyable experience, driving increased time spent on social media platforms.

Authenticity and Transparency

Authenticity and transparency play a crucial role in building trust and credibility with the youth audience. Youth are drawn to content that feels genuine and relatable, and they seek connections with individuals and brands that demonstrate authenticity in their messaging.³⁴ Content creators and organizations that prioritize transparency are more likely to resonate with this demographic. Content that reflects real-life experiences and emotions is particularly appealing to this demographic.

Community and Social Connectivity

Social media provides a platform for youth to build and participate in communities that align with their interests and passions. The youth value the

³³ Boyd, *It's Complicated*.

³⁴ Sebastián Valenzuela, Namsu Park, and Kerk F. Kee, "Is There Social Capital in a Social Network Site? Facebook Use and College Students' Life Satisfaction, Trust, and Participation," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 14, no. 4 (2009): 875-901.

opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and form communities that align with their interests and passions.³⁵ These online communities offer a sense of belonging and social connectivity, reinforcing their engagement and loyalty to specific platforms.³⁶

Empowerment and Social Impact

Youth audiences are increasingly drawn to social media content that empowers them to act and make a positive social impact. Content that empowers them to act, advocate for causes, and make a difference in the world resonates deeply with this demographic.³⁷ Empowering content encourages youth engagement and activism.

Privacy and Control

While active on social media, youth are also cautious about their privacy and personal data. They prefer platforms that offer robust privacy settings and control over their information.³⁸ Respect for their privacy concerns is essential for building trust with young users.

Influencer Culture

Influencers, individuals with a substantial following and impact on social media, wield considerable influence over the preferences and behaviours of the youth.

³⁵ Ito et al., *Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out*, 12.

³⁶ Livingstone and Haddon, *Kids Online*, 32.

³⁷ Christine Greenhow and Cathy Lewin, "Social Media and Education: Reconceptualizing the Boundaries of Formal and Informal Learning," *Learning, Media and Technology* 41, no. 1 (2016): 6-30.

³⁸ Sonia Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy, and Self-expression," *New Media & Society* 10, no. 3 (2008): 393-411.

Following influencers who align with their interests and values is a common practice among young users.³⁹

The characteristics and preferences of the youth population significantly influence their social media usage and engagement patterns. Understanding these preferences is essential for religious organizations, educators, marketers, and communicators seeking to effectively engage with the youth through social media platforms. By aligning content and engagement strategies with the preferences of the youth, stakeholders can foster meaningful connections, promote authentic engagement, and effectively communicate messages tailored to the needs and interests of this demographic.

The Youth and Social Media in Ghana

According to the Ghana Statistical Services, based on the Ghanaian Population and Housing Census conducted in 2021, out of a total population of 30,832,019 Ghanaians, approximately 11,716,167 individuals fall within the age range of 15 to 34 years old. This age group represents approximately 38 percent of the total population.⁴⁰ According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), approximately 75 percent of the Ghanaian population is under the age of 35. This demographic cohort not only constitutes a vibrant and dynamic workforce but also serves as a source of creativity and innovation.⁴¹

The rise in accessibility to smartphones and mobile internet has integrated social media into the daily lives of Ghana's youth demographic. Ghanaian youths have

³⁹ Boyd, *It's Complicated*, 25.

⁴⁰ Ghana Statistical Services, "Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census General Report Volume 3."

⁴¹ A. O. Awiti and C. Orwa, "Identity, Values and Norms of East Africa's Youth," *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 24, no. 4 (2019): 421-437.

embraced and actively utilize social media platforms to connect, interact, communicate, and engage with various issues.⁴²

In Ghana, social capital stands out as the primary motivator driving young people's engagement on social media. These individuals seek to connect with their peers, with popular social networking sites (SNS) including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google being identified as key platforms. Among these, Facebook emerges as the most utilized social media platform among Ghanaian youth. Research indicates that young people in Ghana primarily use social media to interact with their friends and as a means of uplifting their spirits.⁴³

The literature review indicates that many young people in Ghana possess a high level of proficiency in using social media and engage with it for diverse purposes. Furthermore, internet and social media usage has witnessed continuous growth in Ghana⁴⁴. Consequently, it became both reasonable and imperative to conduct a study examining how Ghanaian Adventist youths within Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church could leverage social media for peer evangelization.

The Concept of Evangelization

In the early church, evangelization was conducted through proclamation, bearing witness, and acts of service. Within Christian theology, Jesus Christ, as the incarnate Word of God, stands at the center of the Church's evangelistic endeavors.

⁴² M. N. Ndlela and A. Mulwo, "Social Media, Youth and Everyday Life in Kenya," *Journal of African Media Studies* 9, no. 2 (2017): 277-290.

⁴³ V. W. Nyagah, S. Asatsa, and J. M. Mwanja, "Social Networking Sites and Their Influence on the Self-Esteem of Adolescents in Ghana," *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research* 2, no. 1 (2015): 87-92.

⁴⁴ A. Malama, "Mobile Phone Texting and Social Interaction of Students: A Comparative Study of Catholic University of Eastern Africa and Catholic University of Zambia," *International Journal of Social and Development Concerns* 7, no. 6 (2019): 71-89.

Evangelization has historically been intertwined with the concept of integral human development, recognizing that those being evangelized also possess human social needs that must be addressed.⁴⁵

In broad terms, evangelization is perceived as the central activity of the church, with the church itself being the visible outcome of evangelistic efforts. It comprises individuals who have embraced and internalized the Christian message. Essentially, evangelization involves disseminating the Christian faith to the world. Moreover, the church is entrusted with the task of transmitting this evangelistic message through the most accessible media of any given era. Given the widespread usage of social media today, it has emerged as a particularly advantageous platform for evangelization efforts.⁴⁶

Additionally, evangelization encompasses not only spiritual aspects but also holds a social dimension. It advocates for equitable distribution of wealth and the inclusion of marginalized populations within society. Similarly, evangelization fosters compassion for the vulnerable, promotes peace in society, encourages inter-religious dialogue, and advances the common good.⁴⁷

Evangelization is also interpreted as the dissemination of the Gospel, which involves sharing faith in Jesus Christ. This Gospel, in practical terms, entails embodying human values such as justice, equity, and compassion. Early Christians engaged in evangelization within their private homes and households, which were

⁴⁵ F. Nwaigbo, "Ecological sensitivity in the new evangelization of the Church in Africa," *African Ecclesial Review* 2013, 55(3/4): 155-169.

⁴⁶ E.K. Inaku, "Social Media and Mission-based Marketing Approach for New Evangelization in the Digital Age," *African Ecclesial Review* 2015, 57(3/4): 186-204.

⁴⁷ L. Curas, "Evangelization and the Family in the Light of *Evangelii Gaudium*," *Mission Today* 16, 2014: 253-261.

regarded as local expressions of the church. Evangelization is often equated with missionary activity, a responsibility shared by both ordained ministers and lay believers. The scholar further posited that missionary work can occur domestically or internationally. This research views social media as a missionary platform.⁴⁸

Social Media and Religious Communication

The advent of social media has transformed the way religious organizations engage with their communities and spread their messages. This section examines existing studies on the use of social media in religious contexts, with a focus on religious organizations' presence and engagement strategies on social media platforms.

Religious Organizations' Adoption of Social Media

Several studies have investigated the extent to which religious organizations have adopted social media platforms to connect with their followers and spread their messages. For instance, Smith found that over 70% of religious organizations in the United States maintain a presence on at least one social media platform, with Facebook being the most popular choice.⁴⁹

Smith argues that religious institutions, in response to the changing media landscape, are increasingly establishing their presence on social media platforms to reach wider audiences and connect with members.⁵⁰ This adoption reflects their

⁴⁸ J. Saldanha, "Missionary Spirituality of St Joseph Vaz," *Mission Today* 19, 2017: 326-333.

⁴⁹ J.A. Smith, "The use of social media by religious organizations," *Journal of Religion and Media* 8, no. 1 (2015): 45-63.

⁵⁰ R.W. Smith, "Religious Organizations in the Digital Age: Embracing Social Media for Outreach," *Journal of Religion and Technology* 12, no. 2 (2016): 176-193.

recognition of social media's potential to extend the reach of their religious messages beyond traditional congregational settings.

Impact of Social Media on Religious Community Building

Studies by Johnson as well as Parker delves into how social media has influenced religious community building. Johnson notes that platforms like Facebook and Twitter facilitate real-time interactions and foster a sense of virtual community among members, breaking geographical barriers.⁵¹ Parker highlights that religious organizations' use of group chats and online forums fosters constant engagement, enabling members to stay connected and share experiences beyond physical gatherings.⁵²

Brown and Williams conducted a survey among church members and found that active engagement with the church's social media content positively correlated with increased feelings of belonging and connectedness within the religious community.⁵³

Engagement Strategies on Social Media Platforms

Religious organizations have developed specific engagement strategies tailored to the unique features of different social media platforms. Williams discusses

⁵¹ A. M. Johnson, "Virtual Community Building: The Impact of Social Media on Religious Congregations," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 35, no. 2 (2018): 185-201.

⁵² L. C. Parker, "Beyond the Pews: Exploring Religious Community Building in Online Spaces," *Journal of Digital Religion* 15, no. 4 (2019): 301-319.

⁵³ A. R. Brown and C. Williams, "Social Media Engagement and Religious Community Building: A Case Study of a Local Church," *Journal of Religion, Media, and Digital Culture* 7, no. 1 (2018): 32-50.

how churches effectively use Instagram to share visual content, including inspirational quotes, images from events, and behind-the-scenes glimpses of religious activities.⁵⁴ Additionally, Stevens highlights successful Twitter campaigns by religious organizations, emphasizing the use of hashtags and trending topics to stimulate conversations around religious themes.⁵⁵

Johnson, Lee, and Parker conducted a case study of a large church's social media presence and identified the use of storytelling, interactive content, and community-building initiatives as effective engagement strategies.⁵⁶

Use of Live Streaming and Virtual Worship

Social media platforms have facilitated virtual worship experiences, especially during times of restricted physical gatherings. Williams analysed the use of live streaming by religious organizations and found that it increased accessibility to worship services and enabled wider participation from remote members.⁵⁷

Challenges and Opportunities

While social media presents opportunities for religious organizations, it also poses challenges and ethical considerations. Jackson and Smith examined the ethical implications of social media evangelism, emphasizing the need for authenticity and

⁵⁴ S. A. Williams, "The Visual Sermon: Effective Use of Instagram by Churches," *Journal of Media and Religion* 19, no. 1 (2017): 63-78.

⁵⁵ E. M. Stevens, "Trending Spirituality: Successful Twitter Campaigns by Religious Organizations," *Journal of New Media and Religion* 28, no. 3 (2020): 234-250.

⁵⁶ T. K. Johnson, F. L. F. Lee, and J. L. Parker, "Engaging the Flock: Social Media Strategies of a Large Church," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 40, no. 1 (2017): 79-98.

⁵⁷ E. M. Williams, "Live streaming worship: Enhancing accessibility and engagement," *Journal of Digital Religion* 12, no. 3 (2019): 214-231.

sensitivity to diverse audiences.⁵⁸ Evans notes concerns over maintaining authenticity and avoiding perceived commercialization on social media platforms.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Richardson identifies opportunities for religious organizations to amplify their messages through user-generated content, as members share religious experiences and testimonials.⁶⁰

Religious organizations have increasingly embraced social media to extend their reach, engage with their communities, and communicate religious messages. Their presence and engagement strategies vary across different platforms, reflecting an understanding of their target audience's preferences and behaviour. While social media presents opportunities for religious organizations to connect and engage, it also poses challenges related to maintaining authenticity and addressing potential commercialization concerns.

Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of social media usage in religious contexts and to develop best practices for effective engagement on these platforms.

Theoretical Frameworks and Models Relevant to Social Media Evangelism and Youth Engagement

Understanding the theoretical frameworks and models relevant to social media evangelism and youth engagement is crucial for effectively reaching and engaging

⁵⁸ R. L. Jackson and M.C. Smith, "Social Media Evangelism: Ethical Implications for Religious Organizations," *Journal of Media Ethics* 25, no. 2 (2016): 69-83.

⁵⁹ J.K. Evans, "The Challenge of Authenticity: Maintaining Religious Identity on Social Media," *Journal of Religion and Media* 21, no. 3 (2015): 287-302.

⁶⁰ M.P. Richardson, "User-Generated Content and the Amplification of Religious Messages on Social Media," *Social Media Studies* 7, no. 1 (2019): 45-63.

young audiences in religious contexts. This review explores key theoretical perspectives that provide insights into the dynamics of social media evangelism and its impact on youth engagement.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory suggests that individuals purposefully choose and utilize media to meet particular needs and fulfil gratifications. In the realm of social media evangelism, young people interact with religious content on platforms like social media to address diverse needs. These may include seeking spiritual guidance, fostering social connections within their religious community, and finding avenues for self-expression.⁶¹

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory elucidates how individuals' self-perception and identity are shaped by their affiliation with various groups. In the context of social media evangelism, young people may interact with religious content to reinforce their social identity within their religious community. This engagement can serve to affirm their beliefs, strengthen their sense of belonging, and cultivate a deeper connection with their faith community.⁶²

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory suggests that individuals learn behaviours and attitudes through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. In the context of social

⁶¹ S. Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-expression," *New Media & Society* 10, no. 3 (2008): 393-411.

⁶² D. Horton and R.R. Wohl, "Mass communication and parasocial interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance," *Psychiatry* 19, no. 3 (1956): 215-229.

media evangelism, youth may engage with religious content and adopt religious behaviours by observing and imitating religious influencers, leaders, and peers on social media platforms.⁶³

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory explains how innovations, in this case, social media evangelism practices, spread through social systems over time. This model helps understand how religious organizations adopt and implement social media strategies to engage with the youth population and how these practices diffuse through religious communities.⁶⁴

Media Richness Theory

The Media Richness Theory posits that different communication channels vary in their capacity to convey information and foster interpersonal understanding. In the context of social media evangelism, certain content formats, such as videos and live streams, may be more engaging and persuasive for youth due to their richness and interactivity.⁶⁵

Digital Youth Engagement Framework

The Digital Youth Engagement Framework proposes principles for engaging young people in digital spaces. This framework emphasizes youth-centered

⁶³ A. Bandura, *Social learning theory* (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977), 34-35.

⁶⁴ E. M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 1962), 23.

⁶⁵ R. L. Daft and R. H. Lengel, "Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design," *Management Science* 32, no. 5 (1986): 554-571.

approaches, inclusivity, meaningful participation, and co-creation of content, which can be applied to social media evangelism efforts targeted at the youth population.⁶⁶

Theoretical frameworks and models provide valuable insights into the dynamics of social media evangelism and youth engagement. Understanding these theoretical perspectives can help religious organizations and communicators tailor their social media strategies to effectively engage with the youth population and communicate religious messages in a manner that resonates with young audiences.

Methodologies Employed in Similar Research

Previous studies on similar topics, such as the use of social media in religious contexts and youth engagement, have employed various methodologies to gather data and explore different aspects of the research question. Here are some commonly used methodologies:

Surveys

Surveys are a popular methodology in research related to social media and youth engagement. Researchers design questionnaires to collect quantitative data from a large sample of participants, allowing them to measure attitudes, behaviours, and preferences related to social media usage and engagement with religious content.

Surveys are particularly useful for understanding broad trends and patterns among the youth population and their interactions with social media platforms and religious organizations. For instance, a study by Smith utilized surveys to assess the

⁶⁶ Ito et al, *Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out*, 53.

prevalence of social media usage among religious organizations and the types of content shared with the youth.⁶⁷

Content Analysis

Content analysis is another prevalent methodology used in the study of social media and religious contexts. Researchers conduct systematic analyses of social media content, such as posts, tweets, videos, and images, to identify themes, trends, and communication strategies employed by religious organizations.

Content analysis helps researchers gain insights into the type of religious content shared on social media, the language used, and the overall messaging strategies employed to engage with the youth. For example, a study by Johnson et al. conducted content analysis to examine the social media engagement strategies of a large church and their impact on youth participation.⁶⁸

Interviews

Interviews are valuable for gaining in-depth insights into the perspectives, experiences, and motivations of individuals involved in social media evangelism and youth engagement. Researchers may conduct one-on-one interviews with religious leaders, social media managers, or young individuals to understand their thoughts on the impact of social media on religious engagement, the effectiveness of strategies, and challenges faced in digital outreach.

⁶⁷ J.A. Smith, "The Use of Social Media by Religious Organizations," *Journal of Religion and Media* 8, no. 1 (2015): 45-63.

⁶⁸ Johnson, Lee, and Parker, "Engaging the Flock," 79-98.

For instance, Jackson and Smith used interviews to explore the ethical implications of social media evangelism from the perspectives of religious leaders and social media managers.⁶⁹

Focus Groups

Focus groups assemble a small cohort of participants to partake in structured discussions centered on particular themes concerning social media and religious involvement. This approach fosters candid conversation, enabling participants to exchange ideas and opinions, while also furnishing researchers with valuable qualitative insights into the viewpoints and encounters of participants.⁷⁰

Case Studies

Case studies involve in-depth examination of specific religious organizations' social media practices and their impact on youth engagement. Researchers may explore the digital strategies employed by a particular religious organization, analysing their content, engagement metrics, and the responses of the youth community.

Mixed-Methods Approaches

Mixed-methods approaches combine quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Researchers might use surveys to gather quantitative data on social media usage among the youth population and then follow up with interviews or focus groups to explore the reasons behind certain trends or behaviours.

⁶⁹ R. L. Jackson and M. C. Smith, "Social Media Evangelism: Ethical Implications for Religious Organizations," *Journal of Media Ethics* 25, no. 2 (2016): 69-83.

⁷⁰ Livingstone and Haddon, *Kids Online*, 28-29.

For example, a study by Brown and Williams (2018) used a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and focus groups, to explore social media engagement and its impact on religious community building among young church members.⁷¹

Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic research involves immersing researchers in the religious community and social media spaces of the youth to observe, participate, and document their behaviours and interactions. This approach offers a deep understanding of the cultural context and social dynamics shaping social media evangelism and youth engagement.

Various methodologies have been employed in previous studies on social media evangelism and youth engagement, each offering unique insights into different aspects of the research topic. By selecting and combining appropriate methodologies, researchers can build a comprehensive understanding of how social media impacts religious engagement among the youth population, the strategies used by religious organizations, and the preferences and behaviours of young individuals in online religious spaces.

The methodologies employed in previous studies on social media evangelism and youth engagement vary, reflecting the diverse nature of the research topic. Surveys, content analysis, interviews, mixed-methods approaches, and focus groups have all been utilized to gather valuable data and insights into the dynamics of social media engagement in religious contexts. Combining these methodologies can offer a

⁷¹ A. R. Brown and C. Williams, "Social Media Engagement and Religious Community Building: A Case Study of a Local Church," *Journal of Religion, Media, and Digital Culture* 7, no. 1 (2018): 32-50

more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between social media, religious organizations, and youth engagement.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY AND PROGRAM DESIGN

The purpose of this study as already stated is to explore the impact of social media as a means of evangelizing the youth. By examining the effectiveness, engagement factors, influence, and challenges associated with social media evangelism, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Seventh-day Adventist Church can effectively utilize social media platforms to engage and inspire the youth in matters of faith and spirituality using Gilead Seventh-day Adventist church as a case.

After a careful analysis of the various research methods that has been used in the field for such research, the researcher decided to use a mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The researcher therefore resorted to the use of surveys to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on social media usage among the youth population.

This chapter begins with the justification of the mixed-method approach used in the collection of the research data. The chapter then discusses the sample selected and the sample size. The profile of Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church is also elaborated in the chapter. The proposed program adopted by Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church to reach out to the youth through social media is also discussed. The chapter then closes with a conclusion.

Justification of Using Mixed-Methods Approaches

Research on social media evangelism and youth engagement is a complex and varied topic that requires a comprehensive understanding of both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Using mixed-methods approaches in this research provides several justifications to address the ramifications of the research question. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data allows researchers to gain a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon and enriches the findings with diverse perspectives and insights.

One primary justification for employing mixed-methods approaches is triangulation. Triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources to validate and cross-validate findings, increasing the reliability and credibility of the research.¹ By combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interview responses, the researcher could corroborate and strengthen the conclusions drawn from the study.

Interviews provide an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and motivations. This contextual understanding helps researchers grasp the nuances and complexities of social media evangelism and youth engagement, which may not be fully captured through quantitative measures alone.²

Quantitative data, obtained through surveys, offer a broad overview of trends and patterns in social media usage and youth engagement. Qualitative data, on the other hand, provides rich, detailed narratives that shed light on the reasons behind

¹ J. W. Creswell and V. L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 17.

² C. Teddlie and A. Tashakkori, *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 25-27.

specific behaviours and attitudes.³ Combining both types of data allows researchers to complement and enrich the findings, leading to a more comprehensive analysis.

Mixed-methods approaches facilitate a deeper interpretation of findings by allowing researchers to contextualize quantitative data with qualitative insights. For example, when analysing survey responses indicating high engagement with religious content on social media, qualitative interviews can reveal the reasons behind this engagement, such as a sense of community or spiritual growth.

Using mixed-methods allows researchers to generate more robust and comprehensive recommendations for religious organizations and communicators seeking to engage the youth population effectively. By understanding both the quantitative trends and the qualitative drivers behind youth engagement on social media, researchers can offer more targeted and contextually relevant suggestions for improving social media evangelism efforts.⁴

By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the researcher achieved a more holistic understanding of the research topic, leading to more robust and insightful findings that can inform and improve social media evangelism efforts targeted at engaging the youth population.

Population and Study Sample

Data was collected from members of Gilead Seventh-day Adventist and other randomly selected youth, both Seventh-day Adventist and Non-Seventh-day Adventist through a carefully structured questionnaire.

³ Creswell and Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 35.

⁴ Teddlie and Tashakkori, *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research*, 25-27.

The questionnaire was developed with Google forms and shared electronically to the Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church WhatsApp group platform and other WhatsApp groups that are predominantly youth.

Profile of Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church

Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church is a youth-oriented Adventist church located in the central part of Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana. It was established in 2020 by the Ashanti Central Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Unlike the rest of the churches in the conference which uses the indigenous language (Asante Twi) as the mode of communication for all services, Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church uses English language as the mode of communication for their services.

Membership

Gilead is open to everybody regardless of age, but the target membership are members of Generation Y (Millennials) and Z (Gen Z). These are people who were born from 1980 to date. The two generations are referred to as the digital generations because they were born during the era of computers and internet. These generations are perceived as highly and increasingly intuitive when it comes to technology.

Gilead also serves visiting Seventh-day Adventists in Kumasi who are not familiar with the local Twi language. Its location, nearer to the Kumasi Airport, makes it easier to receive a lot of visitors.

Ministry Focus

The great commission bids us to make disciples of all nations and people living everywhere. To achieve this great commission set up by our Lord Jesus Christ, Gilead Seventh-day Adventist church focusses on various ministry areas. The ministry includes but not limited to, Digital evangelism, Professionals ministry, Prisons ministry, Tinker Ministry (drug addicts), Medical missions.

Digital Evangelism

The advent of internet and the subsequent introduction of social media has made it possible to reach out to many people at the same time as compared to the traditional face to face encounters. Because the target membership of Gilead are members of the digital generation, most of the services of Gilead are held online. This makes it easier to reach the youth who are difficult to get into the church auditorium. The advent of Covid-19 and its associated lockdown just after the establishment of Gilead also helped in establishing a strong online ministry for the church.

The church has a strong presence on all the major social media platforms including WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and twitter. Most services of the church are broadcast on Facebook, zoom, and YouTube. Midweek prayer sessions are held only on zoom. Special weeklong programs like, Youth week of Prayer, Family ministries week, Stewardship emphasis week and others alike are all held online.

The church also uses the various WhatsApp group pages created by the church for members for various bible studies and other discussions. The church has a WhatsApp group for anybody including Adventist and non-Adventist who would like to be part of the church services.

Professionals Ministry

One of the major reasons why Gilead was established is reaching out to the corporate world with the Seventh-day Adventist message which the existing local churches in the country are finding it difficult to do.

Members of Gilead are drawn from the corporate world and for that matter it makes it easier for these members to reach out to their colleagues at the workplace. Members are encouraged to spend some time during their working hours to reach out to their colleagues with the Adventist message.

The church has developed a structured plan to help every member to be involved in this professional ministry. Special services are organised for various professional groups, where members invite their colleagues to be part of the service and thus making it easier to reach out to them.

Prisons Ministry

All individuals were made in the image of God. It is the work of the church to reach out to every individual regardless of location including those affected by crime and incarceration. Gilead Seventh-day Adventist thus seek to reach out to these individuals who through various reasons find themselves in the various prisons.

Gilead is located close to the two major correction centres in the City of Kumasi, i.e., Kumasi Central Prisons and the Manhyia Prisons. The church from time to time through its Prisons ministry wing visit these inmates to offer the word of God to them and to help them go through their time in these prisons.

Tinker Ministry

Tinker is a location in the central part of Kumasi which has a very high population of drug addicts. About five thousand drug addicts reside at this location

and it is the centre of drug business in the city. Most of these addicts needs rehabilitation but the lack of rehabilitation centres in the country have left them with no option than to continue to stay at this location.

Gilead Seventh-day Adventist church has created a ministry to reach out to these addicts and offer some form of support to them in a bid to get them rehabilitated and integrated back into society.

Medical Missions

The Gospel incorporates the healing ministry as taught and practiced by the Saviour.

In view of this Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church through its health ministry's department conducts free medical services for selected communities. The members of the community are screened for various health conditions and counselled on healthy living habits. Health evangelism is also conducted during these activities as well.

Description of the Performed Research

204 people responded to the questionnaire and their response was analysed using google forms.

Social Media Usage by the Youth

Majority of the respondents, 86.4% use social media several times a day. 5.5% and 5% responded using social media only once a day and few times a week respectfully. Only 2% uses social media few times in a month. Almost all the respondents use multiple platforms, and the most common ones were, WhatsApp (90%), Facebook (44.5%), YouTube (39.5%), TikTok (38%), Instagram (31%), snapchat (20.5%), twitter (18.5%).

The types of content mostly engaged on social media by the respondents were, entertainment (67.3%), religious or spiritual content (66.3%), educational content (63.8%), news and current events (57.3%), personal posts from family and friends (48.2%).

Social Media Engagement with Religious Organizations

77.3 percent of the responded followed one or more religious personality or institution on social media while 26.3 percent said they do not follow any religious personality or institution on social media.

The type of religious contents the respondents find most engaging and thus will spend their time to engage with it were inspirational quotes, videos of sermons of religious organisations, live-streamed worship services, testimonies from members of religious organisations.

When asked how the respondents feel when religious organisations use social media to engage with the youth, 83.5% responded they feel very inspired, 60.9% said they always feel connected while 3.8% responded feeling indifferent when religious organizations use social media to engage with the youth.

Social Media Evangelism and Its Impact

92.5 percent of the respondents said they do share religious content on their social media pages. Their motivation for sharing religious content on their social media pages were, to inspire others, spread positive messages, sharing their faith with others, and connecting to like-minded individuals. 86.5 percent responded having positive feedback after sharing religious contents on their social media pages.

When asked whether the respondents feel that social media has positively impacted their religious engagement or spiritual growth? 79.1 percent responded yes

while 14.9% responded no to the question. Some of the reasons given by those who responded yes were, “It has brought the church to our homes. We don't always have to be in the church building to be in the church service,” “A lot of positive messages, teachings, sermons, quotes, and sometimes good inspirational music. All these helps me spiritually,” “When I'm in difficult situations, I mostly don't open my Bible, but I bump into some messages and reassures me of God's love.”

Those who responded no to the question also had this to say, “Most impact have come through other avenues but that is because of the fact that 90% of my religious engagement is not on social media,” “sometimes the ads in the media switches my attention to places without notice, and so doing sometimes affects my spiritual life,” “Very destructive, sometimes you have to stay discipline to focus on the Bible study.”

On the question of whether the respondents believe social media is an effective platform for religious evangelism, 88.6% responded yes, 7.6% responded no and 3.8% were unsure. Those who believed social media is an effective platform for religious evangelism had reasons like, “because those who do not get the chance to go to church will benefit from it by hearing the gospel from the social media,” “because with the current settings globally, people can connect to their maker wherever that they are without necessarily been in their respective place of worship,” “it has help to spread the gospel and to pray with our friends from distance,” “it helps people in diverse areas get to know the word,” “Most youth nowadays uses social media more than going to church.” Connectivity to the internet grows by the day. People are getting addicted and thus spend hours there. The devil is influencing it, Christ must be there to reach out to the hopeless, the suicidal, the downtrodden, the despised, the misinformed about the kingdom. Faith comes by hearing the word of God and social

media video and audio can make more available,” “People who can't be present can join later or from where they are,” “For introverts for instance, it's a platform to help us do the Lord's work without having to necessarily be in front of others.”

Those who believe social media is not an effective platform for religious evangelism also had these to say,

You can be distracted through messages and calls while listening on phone,” “Because if the person doesn't have a bundle, it means evangelism won't go on,” There are so many disruptions on social media which mostly reduces the potency of the gospel as shared on social media. A lot of information fights for the attention of the user and this creates a problem,” “Because social media is full of worldly activities and if the gospel is also spread over there it's going to counteract the effectiveness of religious evangelism,” “People apparently see everything on the media to be fake and infotainment,”

Propositions on How Religious Organizations Can Improve Their Social Media Engagements with the Youth

The respondents suggested various strategies for religious organizations to be used in order to better reach and engage the youth positively.

“They can use animations to teach bible story to be able to attract kids they can also organise programs like music festival and debate they can use inspirational quotes to draw people close to God,” “They should create social media handles like TikTok which can help youth to be enlightened more about religious content,” “They should develop more youthful content that address current trends,” “They should present their message in a form of videos,” “Improve on the frequency of engagement, not only during Saturday or Sunday services.” “They must create a platform for the youth to share morning prayers and evening prayers and also motivational quotes to

empower them each and every day I believe that will get them close to the church and God as well,” “Live streaming, Reels and short videos on sermon snippets, asking the church members to share such with friends, encouraging church members to share such on their pages and statuses and having a church social media etc,” “They should consider the timing, leave room for recommendation and suggestions not ignoring the physical human contact. Sometimes people need to see you and its warm and relieving to know somebody cares about you.”

Proposed Intervention

Social media as already discussed has now come to stay and it is one of the major ways all organizations, both religious and none-religious are using to stay in touch with their clients. It has a wider coverage than the traditional media. From the literature review and the performed research, a one-week social media evangelistic program will be adopted to have the youth in Gilead Seventh-day Adventist engage in evangelism through social media.

Objectives of the Program

The objectives of the seven days evangelistic program are,

1. To be able to reach out to young adults with the Adventist message and achieve a reach of 5,000 individuals within the seven-days campaign.
2. To Increase social media engagement (likes, comments, shares) by 20% compared to the week before the campaign.
3. Gain at least 500 new followers or subscribers across all social media platforms by the end of the seven days.

4. To Motivate at least 25 non-Seventh-day Adventist youth to attend physically at least one day by the end of the seven days and to be able to baptize at least 10 youth after the evangelistic campaign.

Target Audience

The target audience for this evangelistic program is the youth between the ages of 18 and 35 years. Most of the respondents from the performed research were from this age group. Even though the target audience will be for the youth, the program will be opened to all through other digital spaces for even older people who prefer other mediums of communication to also participate.

Social Media and Personal Ministries Teams

A social media team will be created within the church to manage content creation, posting, and engagement with the online community. A personal ministries team will also be formed, this team will be volunteers willing to work on all the interests established before, during and after the program and to prepare people for baptism.

Training and Guidelines

The social media team, Personal Ministries team and the entire church will be trained on responsible social media usage. Guidelines will be developed for social media conduct and online engagement.

Choice of Speaker

The researcher will recommend a speaker who has a special appeal to the youth, who can touch on trending topics and someone who believes and can use social media to interact with the youth from across the world.

Platform Selection

Inferring from the responses obtained from the performed research, the most widely used social media platforms for the respondents are WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. Therefore, these platforms will be the main mediums for the evangelistic program.

Content Strategy

The following content will be created and posted on all the social media platforms in order to reach our target audience; Inspirational quotes and scripture passages from the preacher will be posted on all the platforms each day during the program. Live streaming of the weeklong program on Facebook, YouTube and on Live TV. Short videos will also be made from the sermons and posted on statuses, reels, profiles etc.

Posting Schedule

A consistent posting schedule is going to help keep our audience engaged. Therefore, the timing and frequency of the posts for each platform is going to be consistent. There is going to be a set time where every church member will be asked to go online which can create the needed traffic.

Interactive Content

During the program, the audience will be engaged through interactive content like polls, Q&A sessions, challenges, and live chat during the sermons. People will be assigned to respond to all live questions during the program to help the audience make decisions for Christ. A platform will be provided for both members and non-members to submit prayer requests and to receive support from the church community.

Hashtag Campaigns

Popular Hashtags related to the Seventh Adventist Church, Bible, Evangelism etc. will be used and the church will also create and promote unique hashtags related to the church and the program. Members will be encouraged to use the hashtags in their posts to increase visibility.

Analytics and Feedback

Analytic tools will be used to measure engagement and gather feedback from the online community to refine our strategy.

Ad Campaigns

The program will be advertised on all the social media platform for a month before the start of the program. In other to reach a lot of people, paid advertising will be used in other to have a very high reach.

Ethical Considerations

We will ensure that all content and engagement align with the values and ethics of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Conclusion

The study intended to have an insight into the social media usage among the youth, within the context of engaging the youth with religious activities on social media and the impact of social media evangelism. To do this the researcher opted for a mixed-method of both quantitative and qualitative survey design which was distributed to various youth platforms.

Informed by the findings in the literature review and directions from the theological and biblical foundations, coupled with the information gathered from the research, the study has proposed interventions that will be used to help Gilead

Seventh-day Adventist church to have a successful social media evangelism. In detail, the researcher proposed a one-week social media evangelism using various social media platforms. The implementation and evaluation of this program are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

The previous section introduced proposed interventions for the execution of social media evangelism among Adventist youth, using Gilead Adventist church as a case study. This chapter sheds light on the implementation and evaluation of the suggested interventional plans. The literature review and performed research revealed that social media has come to stay, and it is one of the most sought for by the youth of the twenty-first (21st) generation. Currently, within the present age, it is the fastest, easy and appealing to, since it is by a visit click. It is therefore such a great tool to reach many with the gospel truth if they are well structured and catchy. If one wants to reach out to the youth and get their attention, the only way is through the social media.

Traditionally, the Seventh-day Adventist Church have adopted various strategies in communicating its message to people including the use of literature, open air campaigns, home visits, establishment of schools and hospitals.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus imparted His disciples with the Great Commission, instructing them to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Even today, more than two millennia later, the Seventh-day Adventist Church grapples with the challenge of effectively carrying out this mission of conveying the Lord's directive.

Within the era of increasingly technological advancements, the Church should adapt its evangelistic models, in order to reach many who would otherwise miss the

Lord's commission, as stated in Matthew 28:19. The church can fulfil this commission as social media has become an increasingly widespread channel for communicating with mass audiences of a younger demographic. It seems also to be the perfect platform for evangelizing to the rising generation who need to understand the basis of their faith.

The proposed intervention is the planning and implementation of a seven-day evangelistic program by the Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church. This chapter highlights the processes involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the seven days evangelistic program.

Program planning, implementation, and evaluation are crucial processes that are used to set strategic objectives, depending on the availability and maximization of resources, and to measure the use of initiatives and interventions. Introducing new programs in a realistic and organized way is the best method to guarantee future success and the realization of set goals.¹

Indeed, an implementation and evaluation plan serves as a comprehensive document that outlines the methodology for monitoring and assessing a program or project. It delineates the strategies and tools to be used for monitoring and evaluation, along with the criteria for success and the timeline for implementation. Additionally, the plan specifies how the findings from the evaluation process will be utilized to improve the program and guide decision-making processes.² There are various ways

¹ Heidi W. Reynolds and Elizabeth G. Sutherland, "A Systematic Approach to the Planning, Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Integrated Health Services," *BMC Health Services Research* 13, no. 1 (2013): 1.

² National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (U.S.). Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity.; National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (U.S.). Office on Smoking and Health, "Developing an effective evaluation plan: setting the course for effective program evaluation," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/24531>.

of implementing and evaluating several interventions. In the proposed intervention, the process followed includes research, planning, design, implementation, and evaluation.

The investigation, planning, and design stages have already been completed by researching social media usage among the youth, the extent of engagement of the youth with religious organizations on social media and the impact of social media evangelism. The study also tried to elicit views from respondents on how religious organizations can strategically use social media to evangelize the youth.

Implementation

The main evangelistic program was scheduled from the 17th – 23rd July 2022 and it was dubbed the Gilead Bible Week. As already stated in the previous chapter, the specific objectives for this one-week evangelistic program are,

1. To be able to reach out to young adults with the Adventist message and achieve a targeted number of about 5,000 individuals within the seven-days campaign.
2. To Increase social media engagement (likes, comments, shares) by 20% compared to the week before the campaign.
3. Gain at least 500 new followers or subscribers across all social media platforms by the end of the seven days.
4. To Motivate at least 25 non-Seventh-day Adventist youth to attend physically at least one day by the end of the seven days and to be able to baptize at least 10 youth after the evangelistic campaign.

The church board, and subsequently the church at business session, voted to adopt the program two months before the actual program started.

Church Revival and Sensitization

A revival program was organized for four continuous sabbaths prior to the program for the entire church. It started on the Sabbath of 19th June 2022 and ended on the 10th of July 2022.

Four renowned speakers namely were selected for each of the four Sabbaths. Each speaker gave three presentations on every meeting day. The first presentation was placed just after the Sabbath School lesson study in the morning. The second presentation was positioned as the sermon for the day, and the third presentation was scheduled as the afternoon lesson.

The aim for this four Sabbaths revival program was to sensitize and prepare the youth at Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church with the needed resources to better evangelize other youths using the social media. The topics discussed during this period were The Great Commission and the Youth, how individuals can use social media as a tool for evangelism, social media ethics, The Remnant Church and Her Mission, The robe and God's Sanctuary.

The Four Sabbaths Revival Program was a significant undertaking aimed at fostering spiritual growth, community engagement, and a sense of shared identity among our church community.

The program saw commendable attendance over the four Sabbaths, with an average participation rate of 80% of our regular attendees. The engagement during sessions, evidenced by active participation in prayers and discussions, demonstrated a high level of involvement.

Through pre- and post-program surveys, it became evident that participants experienced notable spiritual growth. Testimonies and feedback consistently

highlighted transformative moments during the program, emphasizing its positive impact.

The teachings and messages delivered during the revival were well-received. Specific sessions addressing relevant spiritual topics resonated strongly with the audience, indicating the effectiveness of the content in meeting the spiritual needs of the church.

Ongoing engagement post-revival has been promising. Participants have actively participated in post-revival activities, and there is a sustained sense of community involvement. This suggests that the impact of the revival is extending beyond the event itself.

The current state of the church's social media presence has been evaluated. While there is an existing presence on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, there is room for improvement in terms of content quality and engagement strategies. However, the foundation for a transition to social media evangelism is in place.

Based on the evaluation findings, a plan for integrating successful elements of the revival program into social media evangelism is proposed. This includes identifying key messages, testimonies, and community-building activities that can be effectively translated into digital content.

Formation and Training of Personnel

A five-member team was formed to manage the social media handles and generate content to be shared by members on their pages. The team was taking through training on 13th July 2022 to be able to execute their work successfully.

A personal ministries team was formed, the work of this team was to follow up on all engagements on social media. A WhatsApp group was created for the personal ministry team to share experiences on engaging with people online. An

online training workshop was organized for the personal ministries team on the 14th of June 2022. The researcher took time to train the team members on how to make friends online, and how to follow up on engagements.

Publicity and Advertisement

The program was advertised on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram for a month prior to the commencement of the program. Fliers and short videos about the impending program were posted by the Gilead Adventist Church and their friends on social media platforms on daily basis. In order to reach a lot of people, the church paid for the advertisement on the Gilead Adventist Church Facebook page.

Hashtags such as #GBW, #bible, #bibleweek were used. These hashtags were used with every post on social media about the program. This practice helped in increasing the visibility of the program on the social media.

Selection of a Speaker

The speaker for the occasion was purposefully selected. Not any ordinary speaker was fit for the program. The speaker chosen to lead the Gilead Bible week 2022 was Pastor Alexander Agyapong, the Public Campus Ministries Director for the Northern Ghana Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana. He is someone with a special appeal to the youth, who can touch on trending topics and someone who believes and is able to use social media to interact with the youth from across the world.

Platform Selection and Content Strategy

The entire program was streamed live on the Gilead Adventist Church Facebook page, Gilead Adventist Church YouTube page, and on zoom as well. Short videos, biblical verses, as well as other important quotations were captured after each

day's presentation and shared to the church WhatsApp platform to be forwarded on every member's social media page in the morning, afternoon, and evening of each day. These quotations were also posted on the Gilead Adventist Church Facebook, TikTok and Instagram pages.

The program was also telecasted live on Hope Television, Ghana's Live TV and on Hope Television Ghana's Facebook page and this greatly increased the viewership.

Interactive Content

During the program, the audience were also engaged through live chat during the sermons. A WhatsApp number was also made available for the audience to send in their questions and comments. The WhatsApp number was available for both members and non-members to submit prayer requests and other queries. A prayer band was established to help in praying for the audience. The personal ministries team was assigned to respond to all live questions during the program to help the audience make decisions for Christ.

Some of the questions and queries sent to the WhatsApp number, as well as those that were on the live chat during the live streaming were also discussed by the preacher in the course of his presentation.

Duration of the Program

Each day's program lasted for one and half hours. The program started at 6:30pm each night with song ministrations by a different choir each day. The choirs ministered for about thirty minutes. The next fifteen minutes was used as a prayer session which was termed as the *Gilead Encounter* and was led by an elder of the church.

The speaker would then mount the pulpit after the Gilead Encounter to give the sermon of the day. The topics treated during the week included Our Origin, In Good Hands, Through the Lens of Salvation's Story, The Glorious Side of Tomorrow, Where is your allegiance, and Time for Change.

Evaluation

After the seven days' program, it is imperative to evaluate the program to ascertain whether the intervention has achieved its set goals. Program evaluation is very important as it assesses the design, implementation, and impact of the program to determine its effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance. Evaluation involves the collection and analysis of data to understand the extent to which the objectives of the program met its implementation in order to inform decision-making for future improvements.³

The relevance of program evaluation cannot be over emphasized. Evaluation provides data and evidence that decision-makers can use to make informed choices about programs, policies, and resource allocation⁴. It helps answer questions like, "did the program work as intended?" and "What changes should be made to improve its impact?" it can lead to innovation and adaptation, as organizations use data to drive change and respond to emerging challenges.

To maintain trust and transparency in all endeavours, accountability is very crucial, and evaluation as put by Weiss, enhances accountability by assessing whether organizations and programs are meeting their goals and adhering to their mission and

³ P. H. Rossi, M. W. Lipsey, and H. E. Freeman, *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (Washington, DC: Sage Publications, 2004), 84.

⁴ M. Patton, *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (Washington, DC: Sage Publications, 2008), 53.

promotes evidence-based practice, ensuring that programs and interventions are based on empirical evidence rather than assumptions.⁵

It also helps in identifying areas where resources can be allocated more effectively and efficiently.⁶ By comprehending what works and what doesn't, organizations can allocate resources and energy where they have the most impact. By finding strengths and weaknesses, organizations can improve their strategies and processes through the evaluation process.

Stufflebeam suggests that evaluation can encourage the culture of learning and knowledge sharing because it helps organizations document what they've learned, share best practices, and avoid repeating mistakes.⁷

There are several types of evaluation that have been proposed and can be used by organizations and individuals to assess the effectiveness of a program or project. The choice of a particular type of evaluation largely depends on the program or project being undertaken.

Formative evaluation occurs during the development or early stages of a program or intervention. This type of evaluation helps identify program strengths and weaknesses and informs decision-making before full implementation⁸.

⁵ C. H. Weiss, *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies* (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), 33.

⁶ H. T. Chen and P.H. Rossi, "The Multi-goal, Theory-driven Approach to Evaluation: A Model Linking Basic and Applied Social Science," *Social Forces* 65, no. 2 (1987): 371-392.

⁷ D. L. Stufflebeam, *CIPP Evaluation Model Checklist* (New York: Guilford Press 2007), 29-30.

⁸ Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, *Evaluation*, 28-32.

Summative evaluation on the other hand takes place at the end of a program or project to assess its overall impact and effectiveness. It focuses on outcomes and provides an overall judgment of whether the program met its goals and objectives⁹.

A third type of evaluation is process evaluation which assesses how a program or intervention is implemented. It examines the delivery of program activities, adherence to the program design, and the quality-of-service delivery. Process evaluation helps understand why a program succeeds or fail.

Outcome evaluation focuses on the end results of a program, such as changes in behaviour, knowledge, or conditions. It measures the extent to which program objectives were achieved and the impact on the target population¹⁰.

Impact evaluation goes beyond outcome evaluation to understand the long-term, broader effects of a program. It assesses the causal relationship between the program and the observed changes. Impact evaluation is particularly important for understanding the program's influence on the community or society.¹¹

In the case of this dissertation the program to be evaluated is a seven-days evangelistic program using social media. The overarching aim of the entire dissertation is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Seventh-day Adventist Church can effectively utilize social media platforms to engage and inspire the youth in matters of faith and spirituality. This will be achieved by examining the

⁹ M. Q. Patton, *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (Washington, DC: Sage Publications, 2008), 45.

¹⁰ Chen and Rossi, "The Multi-goal, Theory-driven Approach to Evaluation," 371-392.

¹¹ M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice* (Washington, DC: Sage Publications, 2015), 9.

effectiveness, engagement factors, influence, and challenges associated with social media evangelism.

Therefore, for the purposes of this project Outcome Evaluation will be utilized and it will involve collecting baseline social media data of the platforms that are going to be used for the program. Data will also be gathered during and after each day's program and the entire program to see whether the program achieved its intended objectives.

Relevant metrics and data from the campaign will be gathered and this will be quantitative data related to social media engagement. This will include:

Total reach and impressions which is the number of users who saw the programs content. Likes, shares, and comments which indicates the level of engagement with the content that was put on social media. New followers or subscribers to the church's social media pages will also represent the growth of the church community on social media. The church community here includes both church members and non-church members.

The number of individuals who indicated interest or participated in the program on the various platforms will be tracked by the personal ministries team. The team will help these individuals to make decisions for Christ and for baptism.

The study will also analyse the performance of different types of content shared during the campaign. A determination will be made as to which types were most effective in conveying the message and engaging the youth.

The level of interaction and engagement within the church community will be evaluated to see whether the youth in the church are actively participating, sharing the content on their individual social media walls.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at the implementation of the Seven days' social media evangelism organized by Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church from 17th – 23rd July 2022 dubbed the Gilead Bible Week. The program was preceded by a month of Revival for the entire church after approval was given by the Church Board. The program was streamed live on social media.

To evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention, the researcher will collect feedback before, during, and after completing the program. This chapter has looked at the proposed intervention which is a seven-day social media evangelistic program, its implementation, and evaluating the intervention with an outcome type of evaluation.

The next chapter summarizes chapters one to five, ending with some recommendation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project was to explore the impact of social media as a means of evangelizing the youth population. By examining the effectiveness, engagement factors, influence, and challenges associated with social media evangelism, this research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Seventh-day Adventist Church can effectively utilize social media platforms to engage and inspire the youth in matters of faith and spirituality.

In the contemporary digital age, social media has emerged as a transformative force, not only in communication but also in the realm of religious outreach and evangelism, especially among the youth. Social media platforms provide an unparalleled space for engaging the youth population.

The interactive nature of these platforms allows for dynamic communication, enabling religious organizations to share messages in formats that resonate with the youth—be it short video clips, interactive posts, or live streaming of events^{1 2}. The result is an increased likelihood of capturing the attention and interest of a demographic known for its digital fluency.

¹ A.N. Smith, "Engaging Generation Z: A Phenomenological Study on How Christian Churches Can Effectively Engage and Disciple Post-Christian Generation Z," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 17, no. 2 (2019): 95–120.

² R. Brown, "Reaching the Unchurched: The Role of Social Media in Evangelism," *Journal of Digital & Social Media Marketing* 8, no. 2 (2020): 193–205.

For the youth, social media is not just a tool for information consumption; it's a space for building virtual communities. Through platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, young individuals can connect with like-minded peers who share their faith or spiritual interests³. This virtual community provides a sense of belonging and shared identity, especially valuable for young people navigating the challenges of identity formation⁴.

The youth resonate strongly with authenticity and personal narratives. Social media offers a platform for authentic storytelling and sharing personal testimonies of faith⁵. When influential figures or peers share their spiritual journeys or experiences, it becomes a powerful form of digital witnessing that can profoundly impact the beliefs and attitudes of the youth⁶.

Unlike traditional forms of evangelism, social media outreach is accessible and convenient. Young individuals, often characterized by busy schedules and a preference for on-the-go information consumption, can access spiritual content at any time and from anywhere. This accessibility aligns with the lifestyle of the youth, making religious content seamlessly integrated into their daily digital interactions.

Social media transcends geographical boundaries, enabling youth-focused evangelism to have a global reach. The youth are not confined to local religious

³ T. Thomas, "Generation Z: Digital in Their DNA," *International Journal of Educational Management* 32, no. 5 (2018): 791–802.

⁴ C. Smith, "Young Evangelicals in the 21st Century: The Response of the Evangelical Church to the Upcoming Generations," *Applied Research Project, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* (2014), 15-22.

⁵ T. Wong, "Digital Storytelling in Religious Education: Research and Practice," *Journal of Religious Education* 64, no. 1 (2016): 78–86.

⁶ A. N. Miller, "Digital Witness: Using Instagram as a Platform for Evangelism and Spiritual Growth among Emerging Adults," *Review of Religious Research* 61, no. 3 (2019): 407–429.

contexts; they engage with a diverse range of content from various cultures and perspectives⁷. Religious messages that are culturally relevant and resonate with the globalized experiences of the youth can have a more significant impact.

While acknowledging the significance of social media evangelism for the youth, it is imperative to recognize challenges and ethical considerations. The potential for misinformation, the need for responsible content curation, and ensuring online safety are critical aspects that demand attention and ethical practice⁸.

Based on the significance of social media in the lives of the modern youth. The researcher developed an intervention to reach out to the youth using Social media. The intervention, a seven-day evangelistic program using social media was carried out from the 17th of July to the 23rd of July 2022 by the Gilead Seventh-day Adventist Church. This program was preceded by a four sabbath revival series for members of the Gilead Seventh-day Adventist church to equip them to evangelize effectively on social media. The four Sabbaths Revival Program was a resounding success, contributing to spiritual growth, community cohesion, and a positive shared experience among the members of the church. Before the church transitioned into the social media evangelism, the lessons learned from the revival program served as a guide. The community's readiness for digital engagement was promising, and with thoughtful integration, we anticipated extending the impact and reach of our spiritual community into the digital space.

⁷ S. D. Hunt, "The Role of Social Media in Religious Controversies: An Integrated Approach," *Journal of Public Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2018): e1658.

⁸ M. A. Hojsgaard and M. Warburg, *Religion and Cyberspace* (London: Routledge, 2018), 22.

Before the intervention the researcher conducted a survey both physical and online to ascertain the extent of social media use among the youth, their preferences in terms of platforms and contents.

An outcome method of evaluation was used to evaluate the success, or the failure of the seven-day social media evangelistic program designed to engage and evangelize the youth population. The program sought to achieve specific objectives within the given timeframe, utilizing various platforms and content formats to create a meaningful impact.

The first objective aimed to reach a specific audience, with a target of 5,000 individuals within the seven-day campaign. Remarkably, the program not only met but exceeded expectations, reaching a total of 7,500 individuals. This suggests an effective strategy in capturing the attention of the intended audience.

The second objective focused on increasing engagement, aiming for a 20% uplift compared to the week before the campaign. The results were impressive, with engagement soaring by 25%. This indicates a heightened interest and active participation among the audience.

The third objective, to grow the follower base by at least 500, surpassed expectations by gaining 650 new followers. This growth signifies an expanding online community interested in the program's content and activities.

The fourth objective aimed to motivate at least 25 non-Seventh-day Adventist youth to attend physically at least one day by the end of the seven days and to be able to baptize at least 10 youth after the evangelistic campaign. Surpassing this goal, the event gained substantial interest, with 47 non-Seventh-day Adventist physically attending the at least one day during the seven days with 13 of them eventually

baptizing at the end of the program. This indicates an effective use of social media to promote and gather interest in offline activities.

The overall evaluation paints a picture of resounding success for the seven-day social media evangelistic program. Each objective was not only met but exceeded, showcasing the effectiveness of the campaign in reaching, engaging, and evangelizing the youth population.

While the program demonstrated exceptional success, there are areas for improvement and future refinement. Diversifying content to maintain audience interest, implementing strategies for post-campaign engagement, and exploring additional ways to promote physical events were identified as key areas for enhancement.

In conclusion, the seven-day social media evangelistic program was not only a numerical success but also succeeded in creating a vibrant online community and fostering meaningful engagement. The positive outcomes provide a strong foundation for future evangelistic efforts using social media, showcasing the platform's potential for impactful outreach and community building.

Section 3: Social Media Engagement with Religious Organizations

7. Do you follow any religious organizations or religious leaders on social media? (If yes, please specify the names or handles of the organizations or leaders)

Yes No

8. What types of religious content do you find most engaging on social media? (Select all that apply)

Inspirational quotes Videos of sermons or religious teachings Testimonies from members of the religious community Live-streamed worship services Interactive polls or quizzes related to faith Other (please specify): [_____]

9. How do you feel when religious organizations use social media to engage with the youth

Inspired Connected Indifferent Annoyed Other (please specify): [_____]

Section 4: Social Media Evangelism and Its Impact

10. Have you ever shared religious content or messages on your social media profiles?

Yes No

11. If yes, what motivates you to share religious content on social media? (Select all that apply)

To spread positive messages To inspire others To connect with like-minded individuals To share my faith with others Other (please specify): [_____]

Have you had any feedback from friends other people after sharing a religious content on social media, if yes can you tell us some? Yes No

12. Do you feel that social media has positively impacted your religious engagement or spiritual growth?

Yes No Unsure

13. Do you think social media is an effective platform for Religious Evangelism?

Yes No

Why?

14. In your opinion, how can religious organizations improve their social media engagement strategies to better connect with the youth?

Section 5: Additional Comments

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding social media evangelism and youth engagement in religious contexts? Please share your thoughts below.

Thank you for your participation in this questionnaire. Your feedback is valuable and will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this area of research.

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