

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Doctor of Ministry  
Emphasis in Leadership

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

**TITLE: A DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAMME FOR THE PASTORS OF  
THE NORTHERN CONFERENCE OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Date completed: February 2017

The researcher noticed in his life as a district pastor, as well as in his years as Ministerial Secretary for 65 pastors, that an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is the only thing that can safeguard a pastor from failure. This is also shown in the Bible with the giants of faith – Abraham, Daniel, David, etc. Too many pastors lose their way or resign because they are not true disciples of God. In doing the research, the goal was to develop a program that pastors can follow to ensure a long pastoral life. From the researcher's perspective, a sign of a true disciple of the Lord is someone who regularly takes part in spiritual disciplines, such as Bible study, prayer, stewardship, etc.

In conducting the research, the researcher decided to use pastors in the conference where he served as the participants in the research project. The group of pastors (N=65) filled out a questionnaire at the beginning of the study, the different interventions followed in the next eighteen-month period, after which the pastors

again completed the questionnaire. The results were then analyzed and collated to form the intervention for a discipleship plan. After doing the research, the data was collected, and the results were compared.

The researcher hypothesized that the improvement in the time pastors spent in the different spiritual disciplines as outlined in the paper would then give rise to the fundamental premise of a spiritual discipleship program. This research was not considered futile, as it could have been that the time for the intervention implement was too short due to constraints on the researcher and participants. This research study and results could form a foundation for use in further study into the topic of improving and enhancing the spiritual well-being of pastors in their districts. It is generally realized that determining spirituality is not an easy task.

In conclusion, to fully realize the potential benefit of the intervention more time should have been given for interventions to continue. As pastors are typically assumed to be at a high level of spirituality, it will, therefore, take time for them to hear, assimilate and implement the different aspects of spiritual maturity into their own lives. A control group of members should have been used to get the comparison between pastor and member spirituality.

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

A DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAMME FOR THE PASTORS OF  
THE NORTHERN CONFERENCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

A dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by

Joseph Johannes Fourie

February 2017

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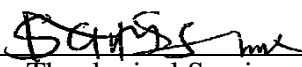
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Dedicated to the Administration and the Pastors of the Northern Conference of South  
Africa. All Glory to God.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This research studied the topic of discipleship and spirituality as pertaining to pastors in the Northern Conference of South Africa. The problem of pastors in the field is that each is a very busy minister, trying to serve a few congregations, keep a spouse and family happy and also making sure their spirituality is at a high level. This is the challenge of the pastor, called by God, but caught in a cycle of busyness. The aim of this research was to come up with a program to help the pastor to make God first in his/her life without neglecting family and congregations—a daunting task indeed.

#### **Ministry Context**

South Africa is called the Rainbow nation for a reason, as it is made up of 50 million people of diverse backgrounds, languages, and cultures. The country has 11 official languages, and nine provinces make up the total area of the country. Of the 50 million population, about 79% are Blacks, 9 % Whites, 9 % Coloureds<sup>1</sup> and 2.5 % Indians and Asians; the remaining 0.5% are other nationalities.

The country has come from a past that was full of racial discrimination and hatred. Since 1994 this has changed, as that year marked the start of a new democratic South Africa where everyone was regarded as important and where no one was discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity or color. Of course, it has been a

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<sup>1</sup>Official race group in South Africa made up of people from a mixed background.

struggle to get the country to where it is now, and it will take many more years before everyone will be able to live peacefully together without feelings of hatred.

In this milieu, the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) has made steady progress since the start of democracy. Before that, the church and state were so closely aligned that it was very difficult for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be taken seriously. The SDA Church in South Africa is part of the Southern Africa Union Conference which also includes countries like Namibia, Lesotho, and Swaziland. The SDA Church in South Africa has a membership of approximately 117,894<sup>2</sup> and is divided into four Conferences, namely the Cape Conference, KwaZulu-Natal Free State Conference, Trans-Orange Conference and the Northern Conference (NCSA). The territories of the Trans-Orange Conference and the Northern Conference, for the most part, cover the same geographical area, due to difficulties in consolidating this area into one Conference.

The Northern Conference covers four of the nine provinces of South Africa, namely Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North-West, and Limpopo. These four provinces have a total of 25 million inhabitants, about half of them found in the Gauteng province, and includes the two biggest cities in South Africa, Pretoria, and Johannesburg. The Northern Conference is an area with wide open urban centres where small towns are the order of the day, but also has many big cities with a well-developed road system and bustling city centers. Gauteng is the hub of the economy of South Africa, with mining operations, large skyscrapers and many other industries. These four provinces are also home to large farming areas as well as some of the most beautiful natural veld and wildlife.

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<sup>2</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2015 (SDA Yearbook 2015)* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 342.

The Northern Conference has a church membership of 19,025.<sup>3</sup> This tells us that there is a huge challenge to spread the Adventist message. To accomplish this massive task, this Conference has a total of 55 district pastors, serving 149 congregations and companies. It shows that there is a ratio of about three congregations per pastor, or 346 members per pastor, a much lower ratio than in the rest of the SAUC. This is mainly due to its history when most members came from conservative denominations where every congregation had and still has, its pastor.

Another reason is the fact that the Conference is financially healthy and can afford that many pastors. There is always pressure on the Conference to employ more pastors, as the membership still want that history to continue. The Conference has congregations with a membership of up to a 1,000, but also small rural congregations with only 20-30 members. The conference also has a large number of companies that are still in the process of becoming fully-fledged congregations.

The NCSA has changed its face in the last twenty years from a mostly White Conference to a thoroughly mixed Conference with White, Coloured, Black, Indian and even a few Portuguese congregations. Change is still taking place as the Black congregations are made up mainly of people from north of the South African border (mainly Zimbabweans, Malawians, Zambians, and others.) and are growing faster than the White and Coloured congregations do. Therefore, the pastoral workforce has also changed from mainly White to more and more pastors of color. The Conference is also making use of pastors from north of the border, and currently, has five that are not originally from South Africa. This, of course, helps to serve those congregations whose membership consists of persons mainly from outside the country's borders.

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<sup>3</sup>SDA Yearbook 2015, 345.

Although some of the challenges that the conference faces may be similar to churches elsewhere in the world, it has its unique problems. Secularism, consumerism, urbanization and the modern technological age, are some of the challenges that are in common with the rest of the world. Another challenge is that pastors who were trained and gathered experience within the country, leave for better opportunities overseas. There has never really been an attempt to determine the main reasons for this outflow of experienced good workers. The loss as a result of moral falls and other causes come to an average of one pastor every three years.

Another issue that is very current is the loss of White English-speaking membership due to Black member influx into some congregations. These immigrants from outside the country come in and usually visit a Black congregation, but due to language and acceptance problems, they leave and start attending the mainly White, English-speaking congregations. Here they are accepted, but when the numbers increase the original White members leave. A creative solution to this problem still needs to be found, but the Conference leadership is constantly working on it.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As the Ministerial Secretary of the Northern Conference, the researcher regularly interacted with the pastors on a personal level. As the researcher looked at own experiences and that of the pastors in the field, there was a realization of a lack of spirituality due to workload. The other problem is that pastors are individuals that work on their own, often in the rural areas far from the conference. These problems pose a serious challenge to the work of making disciples in the congregations. This results in lower productivity in their congregations as it is almost universally accepted

that no pastor can lift their flock to a higher spiritual level than they themselves occupy.<sup>4</sup>

### **Purpose Statement**

The goal of this project was to develop, implement, and evaluate a discipleship program aimed at helping pastors become more effective in their ministry. This will result in a more motivated and vibrant membership who will spread the good news everywhere.

### **Justification**

Congregations need to be led by pastors who are well-trained, spiritually mature and know that they are working for God and not for human beings. To have pastors of this caliber, there needs to be a focused, intentional program that will help them achieve this goal. This project could help pastors realize that they should schedule more time for a closer walk with God; help them to become mentors for each other, and not to be “lone rangers” who work in isolation. They will come to realize the value of regular Bible study, prayer, family time and rest, and have the capability to work together with their colleagues to make a real difference in their areas of work.

With such a team of motivated leaders in a Conference, clear, achievable goals can be set with the assurance that the pastors will follow. It can also lead to focused discipling of members for better results in congregations, where people work together to achieve the goals set before them. If the spirituality of the pastoral team can be improved by even a small margin, it will lead to better statistics, but more than that, to an inspired and motivated pastoral corps.

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<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, “An Appeal to the Ministers,” *Review and Herald*, 8 August 1878, 10.

## **Delimitations**

Although the issues addressed by this project may be found in other Conferences in South Africa, its implementation will be limited to the Northern Conference (NCSA). This is where the researcher serves as Ministerial Secretary. By limiting it to the NCSA, it will allow for a thorough implementation of this project. It should not be difficult to monitor the input and results, to coordinate the training programs, and to implement them efficiently.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Disciple** – The word in the Greek is “matheites,” which means a learner or a follower. The twelve disciples of Jesus were, therefore, the group who followed Him and learned from Him. The disciples became students of Jesus. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands His disciples to make disciples of everyone. Here, just before His ascension to heaven, He asks of them to not only tell people about Jesus but to make them followers of Jesus. They needed to not only know of, but become learners from, and of the Saviour.

**Discipleship** - This is when following Jesus becomes the priority in a person’s life. Bill Hull<sup>5</sup>, in his book on discipleship, says that Jesus taught that faith was to follow Him, and then says: “Discipleship isn’t a program or an event; it’s a way of life.” This means that a person is a disciple not only for one day of the week but constantly living the life of a disciple or follower. Discipleship is how you live your life, not something that is done from time to time.

**Spirituality** – Although spirituality has many meanings in our modern times, the spirituality referred to in this project is based on Christian, Biblical values.

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<sup>5</sup> Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2006), 24.

Spirituality is often seen as synonymous with being a disciple of Christ. So being spiritual is being a real, daily, practicing disciple of Jesus. Spirituality has much more to do with “being” than “doing.”<sup>6</sup> It has to do with what one is and not what one does. The natural tendency is to look at what people do rather than who they are. Often members are judged on what they do, i.e., an individual who prays well is spiritual, or an individual who gives a good lesson study is spiritual. This is not necessarily correct, but it is also true that what one is influences what one does. So, Christian, biblical spirituality is how someone lives as a disciple in the daily life. Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit who resides in their hearts. It is also to overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more Christ-like. It is a way of life. Christian spirituality focuses on the Christian and his or her walk with God. It is more measurable than discipleship or being a disciple.

**Mentoring** – This is a process whereby leaders take someone under their wing and walk a road with that person. Being an example to a person; giving the person sound principles to live and work by, and being available to help and encourage a young person who may need some coaching. There are very interesting biblical examples of mentors – Jethro and Moses, as well as Moses being a mentor to Joshua.

### **Methodology and Procedures**

The research was done by giving a questionnaire to the pastors of the Northern Conference at a point in 2015, after which several interventions was implemented. After eighteen months the same questionnaire was given and the outcome

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<sup>6</sup>Boubakar Sanou, class notes for CHMN/LEAD 706 Spiritual and Theological Foundation for Ministry, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, July 2014.

documented and analyzed to see what results have been gained. The aim was an improvement in spirituality, which is a difficult concept to measure.

Chapter 1 introduces this research by sketching the ministry context broadly, but also the micro context. It gives a short description of the problem investigated, a statement of the purpose of the research and the justification of the study. It also mentions the delimitations and the definition of terms used in the research. It concludes with the methodology, procedures, and the expectations from the research.

Chapter 2 presents a study of the topic from a biblical viewpoint, exegesis of relevant passages, and word studies. Ellen White's writings are also consulted to support the biblical material used.

Chapter 3 deals with an analytical and comparative study of the research. It explores different authors that provide insight to the study. All relevant topics are thoroughly researched.

Chapter 4 narrates the actual field research and ensures the ministerial context is understood, the design of the study, the interventions planned, and how the data is analyzed. The field research is done by way of a questionnaire.

Chapter 5 describes the chronological implementation of the interventions and the final evaluation. It also discusses the research instrument, which is a questionnaire, and the analysis of the data.

Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the process of the research and what the outcome is. It also considers the future and how this research can impact ministry in general and in the setting of the study specifically.

### **Expectations from the Dissertation**

The expectation from the study of this topical and interesting subject is for a program to be developed that can help pastors in the field ensure that their spirituality

is always of primary concern. The study will demonstrate that pastors cannot make effective disciples, which is the main aim of ministry if they are not disciples.

Ministers cannot expect to elevate their membership to a higher spiritual plain if they are not already there.

The goal of the program is for the ministers in the Conference to continually be made aware of this fact, so they can therefore intentionally work on those things that enhance spirituality. As the study of this topic has shown, these elements include intentional and regular Bible study, an active prayer life and keeping the Lord at the center of life. It also includes being a faithful steward of all that God has given, but especially tithing, offering and time management.

The family life should be another priority and a special time should be set aside where the family can be nurtured and made to feel that they are important. Another component of spirituality that needs attention is an awareness of a healthy lifestyle because no worker can be effective without enough rest, exercise, and everything else that will promote healthful living. Ultimately the program that is envisaged for the pastors could become a blueprint for the pastoral team of the Northern Conference, but it can go further and be a possible basis for further study into pastoral spirituality.

The next chapter will now ensure a theological basis for this research. It will attempt to establish a firm base in the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White from which to launch such a study.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL & THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

This chapter will look broadly at how the concepts of discipleship, spirituality and mentoring are used and how these principles play out in the New Testament, in the Old Testament and also in the writings of Ellen G White. In the Old and New Testaments, some Bible characters will be used as examples of how these concepts are lived on a daily basis and how they influence not only the person but others that come in contact with the disciple. The basis of what this study entails is laid in this chapter as the investigation moves systematically through the Old Testament, then the New Testament and eventually to the writings of Ellen White.

In studying the concept of discipleship and being a disciple, it must be realized that these words do not often appear in the Old Testament. Discipleship and the word disciple are New Testament concepts associated with Jesus and His followers. The word “disciple” appears 296 times in the New International Version of the Bible and of these, only two are in the Old Testament. The idea of discipleship has its origin in the word disciple and explains how a disciple will live and what his or her life will be. Spirituality and discipleship refer basically to the same concept and will often be used as referring to the same thing.

By the end of this chapter, it will be clear how these concepts were seen, lived and how they influenced each of these people. The impact of the life lived as a disciple of God and Christ will be shown as the spiritual lives of these followers of

God are researched. It will be demonstrated that the outcome of a life of spiritual growth has a lasting effect that can never be underestimated.

### **Spirituality in the Old Testament**

This section will examine the lives of some Old Testament characters to find out how God featured in their lives and determine the influence of spirituality and how it impacted them.

#### **The Life of Enoch**

According to Genesis 5:24, Enoch “walked with God.” Here, walking with God refers to an intimate, close relationship between God and Enoch – walking with each other. Ellen White<sup>1</sup> says:

He [Enoch] was of one mind with God...If we are of one mind with God, our will, will be swallowed up in God's will, and we shall follow wherever God leads the way. As a loving child places his hand in that of his father and walks with him in perfect trust whether it is dark or bright, so the sons and daughters of God are to walk with Jesus through joy or sorrow.

The relationship was so intimate that Enoch was translated alive to be with God forever. This type of life is not only the constant realization of God's divine presence but the maintenance of the most intimate relations with God. Enoch's life was in complete harmony with the divine will.<sup>2</sup> Enoch was a real disciple of God<sup>3</sup>: “Discipleship means a complete, continuing and lifelong submission to the priorities of Christ.”

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1970), 28.

<sup>2</sup>“He was not; for God took him” (Gen 5:24), *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC), ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976), 1:246.

<sup>3</sup> Rob Warner, *I Believe in Discipleship: The Adventure of Living* (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999), 10.

## **The Man Noah**

Noah is known for being a just man, a man that was faithful and true to the calling God gave him. He did not hesitate or ask questions when he received the command from God. The Bible points out the following about Noah: “He was perfect in his generations” (Gen 6:9). This does not imply sinlessness, but rather a very intimate relationship that Noah had with his Creator; perfect as he walks the rocky road of life with God. He had his faults and his idiosyncrasies, but he never left His Creator’s side.

Noah was obedient to God’s instructions (Gen 6:22). The implication of this for spirituality is that one cannot disassociate obedience from spirituality. As the spiritual realm improves, so the need for obedience grows stronger, not to satisfy an angry God, but because of a love relationship.

Noah was a man of faith. He went into the building of the ark without any previous knowledge of rain as we know it. He just went absolutely and purely on what God told him. Faith in God was one of the real attributes of Noah. Not a blind faith, but a faith based on a trust relationship with God.

Noah knew the voice of God. He had such a close walk with God that he knew when God spoke. He was aware that he needed to trust Him fully and obey the specifics of the command. However, Noah was still subject to temptation and sin. When he made wine and got drunk, he was not in God’s will. He fell, but that does not make him less of a servant and subject of God. He rose above the sin and is still seen as one of the faith giants of God. That is what Noah did, and Paul, in Hebrews, reports that his faith in building the boat that would save his household commends him as one of the faith giants (Heb 11:7).

## **The Life of Abraham**

Abraham is another Old Testament character from whom one can learn what it means to build on, and be in a relationship with, God. Though on more than one occasion his faith faltered, when the Lord commanded Abraham to leave his home country and move to an unknown destination, he did not hesitate but obeyed. Many times in Genesis, it is stated that “God appeared to Abram and said,” or that “the word of the Lord came to him” (Gen 12:7, 15:1, 17:1). Abraham distinguished the voice of the Lord from that of the rest, and that only comes through having a close association with Him.

It takes an intimate relationship before one identifies someone’s voice. When Abraham was tested to sacrifice his son, Abraham did not hesitate, because he knew by experience that it was God speaking to him. Paul asserts in Hebrews 11:17-19 that Abraham obeyed God and was willing to sacrifice his son because he believed that God would resurrect him. Ellen White assures the reader that Abraham was a humble man but also had an interest in bringing God to others.<sup>4</sup> While Abraham had a true sense of humility that every child of God should possess, he still had an intense interest in the souls of sinners.

## **Moses as Leader of Israel**

In further exploration of spirituality in the Old Testament, we find a humble young Israelite by the name of Moses, born during the Israelite slavery in Egypt. He grew up among the elite in Pharaoh’s household. In his zeal, Moses tried to use his own ways to liberate his people – depending on his skill, strength, and position. He soon realized his mistake and fled from Pharaoh’s retribution.

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<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1999), 75.

God used the next 40 years of Moses' life to teach him humility and submission to God's ways. While tending his father-in-law's sheep, he met God (Exod 3:2) and received the call to return to Egypt and be God's appointed vessel to liberate his people from their bondage.

Moses grew in his relationship with God, to the point that he became the intercessor for the Israelite nation (Num 14:11-25). He patiently led them despite their stubbornness. His focus was to fulfill God's call on his life no matter the cost. He even went so far as becoming willing to trade his life for that of this stubborn nation (Exod 32: 32, Num 14). Moses matured in his relationship with God to the point that they spoke face to face as men speak (Exod 33:11). Moses was, unfortunately, denied entry into the Promised Land as the result of losing sight of God's instructions when he gave way to anger (Num 20:10-12).

Emotions impact mankind's relationship with God. Ellen White<sup>5</sup> says the following about Moses: "The strength of Moses was his connection with the Source of all power, the Lord God of hosts. He rises grandly above every earthly inducement, and trusts himself wholly to God." Moses became one of just a select few persons to be resurrected before the second coming, and to be with the Lord in heaven. He is one of the two that was sent to comfort Jesus as He was nearing the end of His earthly ministry (Matt 17:1-3). It is therefore not surprising that Paul, in Hebrews 11, introduces Moses as one of the faith giants of the Bible. A real disciple, as his spiritual walk with God, was authentic, practical and intimate.

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<sup>5</sup>White, 98.

## **Favorite King David**

The next Old Testament character, from whom one can learn about an intimate walk with God, is David. Although his life record was stained with more sins than those of Noah, Abraham and Moses, the Bible records that he was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). David had many wives (2 Sam 5:13), committed adultery (2 Sam 11:1-5), made use of deception (2 Sam 11:6-13), ordered murder (2 Sam 11:14-24), and concealed all this from his household and the citizens of the country.

At the end of his life David, in a moment of uncertainty, conducted a census to show his magnificent reign (2 Sam 24). He is designated a man after God's own heart when he was a godly young man, and apparently because of his constant disposition to acknowledge his wrong, ask for forgiveness, and rededicate his life to God (Ps 51). The fact is that David was a man that lived close to his God; he knew God, and he died after some wise words of counsel to his son Solomon.

## **The Prophets Elijah and Elisha**

It will be good to mention the prophet Elijah and his successor Elisha as well. Elijah was a mentor to Elisha, and although they were different in character, Elisha followed Elijah closely when called (1Kgs 19:19-21), but especially when it came to Elijah's ascension into heaven (2 Kgs 2:1-18). Elisha realized that he needed special guidance, stayed close to his mentor and even asked that a "double portion of your spirit be on me" (2 Kgs 2:9). Elisha could not have asked for a better mentor than Elijah to help him, as a young man, achieve God's purpose for his life. Different characters, but each made a valuable contribution to God's cause.

## **Daniel the Captive**

The last Old Testament character (which will be considered for this study) that exemplifies a spiritual walk with God is Daniel. His life is an example of a purpose driven life (Dan 1:8). Both in small and big things he was determined to please God. Even in the face of death (Dan 6), he remained faithful. What seems to define his commitment is his consistent prayer life (Dan 6:10), even when this could be a risk to his life and position. To him, faithfulness to God was more important than earthly gains. He sought to be an influence for good, rather than allowing his surroundings to influence his walk with God negatively.

According to the *SDA Bible Commentary*<sup>6</sup>, Daniel was a man of “scrupulous integrity, unwavering faithfulness, loyalty to duty, and integrity in words and acts – qualities rarely seen in civil servants of that age.” Ellen White comments that a man, like Daniel, who keeps himself close to God, will act the same way in adversity as when things are going smooth in his life.<sup>7</sup> The faithfulness of Daniel was rewarded with a life of exemplary service to several foreign nations (Dan 6:28).

## **Discipleship in the New Testament**

The discussion of discipleship in the New Testament will be limited to the ministry of Jesus, John, and Paul. Jesus, as well as these two faithful apostles, shows by example and by the writings about them and from their pen, that a life of discipleship is a life of reward. It is the life that will not only benefit the person but also profit those that come in contact with the disciple. Jesus can be seen as the Ultimate Example of a life of discipleship, while John and Paul are fine illustrations of spiritual men that can be imitated.

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<sup>6</sup>“Excellent spirit” [Dan 6:3], *SDABC*, 4:810.

<sup>7</sup>Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1943), 453.

## **Jesus as Example of Discipleship and Spirituality**

From the outset of His ministry, Jesus chose twelve men among His followers to serve as apostles (Luke 6:13). The gospels outline Jesus' expectations of those He chose. Jesus says so beautifully what His mission on earth was in Luke 19:10: "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." It was and still is, humanity itself that was lost. This can still be our statement of intent – saving those that are lost.

**The mission statement.** In Matthew 10:1 and 5-15 Jesus gives the mission statement for His faithful followers. They were to receive power, not only to drive out demons, but also to heal all kinds of diseases. According to the study notes found in the Andrews Study Bible,<sup>8</sup> this verse is the start of "the Missionary Discourse." Jesus is spelling out what the disciples will be doing as they become His disciples. They will receive power, not to fight their own fights and get fame for themselves, but to enlarge the Kingdom of God. Jesus never leaves any of His commissioned apostles without power – He is the one who enables, equips and empowers.<sup>9</sup> They had to give out whatever they received; heal, drive out devils, raise the dead and preach the gospel. They were not to take many belongings on their journeys nor to tarry along the way. They were to stay over where they were welcomed. This is a clear indication that they had to put all their trust in God and not on their own skill, belongings or time.

He first sent His followers, not to the Gentiles, but to the Jews who were His lost sheep. They had a mission to fulfill, and this was now their priority. This starts in the previous chapter (Matt 9:36-38), with Jesus seeing the multitudes and being

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<sup>8</sup>Jon L. Dybdahl, *Andrews Study Bible*, (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 1262.

<sup>9</sup>John M. Fowler, *The Book of Luke* (Silver Springs: MD: Pacific Press, 2015), 141.

“moved with compassion.” He then tells the disciples that the harvest is ready, but there are too few workers to do all the work. Then in chapter 10, He sends the disciples out as part of the workers who need to do the work of reaching the multitudes. Jesus expands His ministry by sending the disciples to go and apply what they had learned under His mentorship. Ellen White comments that other disciples that accompanied Him now had the chance to get closer to Him and it was these others that were sent out as the 70 who also went to preach, heal and bring comfort.<sup>10</sup>

**Connection with Jesus.** In John 15:1-8 Jesus tells His followers very clearly how to make sure that they stay connected to Him. He uses the Old Testament imagery of Israel as a vine to describe the relationship between Him and His nation. Looking at Isaiah 5:1-7, a negative song is found in a vineyard, of course signifying Israel, as opposed to the tribe of Judah at that stage. God tries everything to nurture the vineyard, water it, but to no avail; the grapes are wild. God then says He will take out the vineyard as it is of no use. The “indictment against God’s people is that they have not lived up to God’s expectations.”<sup>11</sup> Then in Isaiah 27:2-13 there is again the imagery of Israel as a vineyard, the restoration of the nation of Israel and the change of a judgment into a restoration for them. They will again be a flourishing vineyard under the watch care of God.

In John 15, Jesus depicts Himself as the true vine, while God is the vinedresser. As Jesus sees Himself as the vine, His disciples must stay as close to Him as a branch that is attached to the vine. He says in John 15:4, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me”. There is an intimate relationship between branch and

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<sup>10</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1940), 488.

<sup>11</sup>Dybdahl, 865.

vine, the branch without the vine is nothing, as it can bear no fruit. Jesus' disciples need that relationship if they want to be fruit-bearing branches that are vibrant and growing. Then God is shown as the vinedresser that tends the vineyard and will prune if it is needed. The result of not being in that very close and intimate attachment to the vine is removal, and He will "gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burnt" (verse 6). The glory that the Father receives is if there is much fruit resulting from this relationship and John concludes this section with the following words from Jesus: "so you will be my disciples" (verse 8). The conclusion of John 15 is that the disciple needs a very close connection and relationship with Jesus for results (fruit bearing), and if that relationship is not there, there is no discipleship at all.

**Prioritizing the relationship with Christ.** This section of Luke's gospel (Luke 14:25-32) has to do with what Christ expects of a real, true disciple. It is clear that this event took place towards the end of Jesus' ministry. Crowds were again thronging around Him and His disciples. It seems as if there was a growing sense that Jesus was going to "proclaim Himself the leader of Israel in a revolt against Rome."<sup>12</sup> There were the sincere followers, but many, perhaps even most, were there for selfish motives or just plain curiosity. Jesus faced them and made plain what the principles for following Him were.

Basically, He asked everybody to think very clearly about what they were doing. Verse 26 starts with a passage that is rather difficult to understand. The idea of hating family before becoming a disciple is not appealing to the modern person, and most probably was not very clear to the people of His time either. Hate in the Bible is usually seen as meaning "love less" and not as the modern meaning of absolute dislike. Jesus wants to make it very clear that "when we compare our relationship

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<sup>12</sup>"There were great multitudes," *SDABC*, 5:811.

with Him to anyone else there should be no competition.”<sup>13</sup> No other relationship should come between the disciple and God, not even the closest people to the disciple. Not even the threat of death should be able to disrupt the faithfulness of a disciple (verse 26).

Verse 27 brings out another aspect of the priority of being a disciple. Bearing the cross has different meanings for different people and for different times. For the person condemned to die by crucifixion in the time of Jesus, his cross had to be carried to the place of crucifixion. It was riddled with shame and hatred by society.<sup>14</sup> It also meant that the disciple had to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, in that He did what had to be done without complaint. If it means that friends and family frown upon the follower, then so be it. The privilege such a person has is the fellowship with the Redeemer of the world. This is the honor that that person receives.

As verses 28-30 is studied, Jesus changes to the idea of planning when you follow Christ. The disciple of Jesus can never take on this responsibility lightly but needs to pray and meditate on it. There is no point in starting something that cannot be finished and seen through to the end. Building a tower, or going into a battle with an enemy are not things that are done haphazardly or without prior work. “The cost of discipleship is the complete and permanent renunciation of personal ambitions and worldly interests.”<sup>15</sup> The follower is now fully committed to Jesus, and what He expects, and other considerations come second.

Verse 33 summarizes the previous section by just reiterating the fact that the follower has to forsake all that he has. Again, Jesus needs to be first, foremost and all

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<sup>13</sup> Kyle Idleman, *Not a Fan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 59.

<sup>14</sup> “Taketh not his cross,” *SDABC*, 5: 380.

<sup>15</sup> “Counteth the cost,” *SDABC*, 5:812

relevant if the disciple wants to be effective. “Discipleship involves the complete placing on the altar of all that a man has in this life – plans, ambitions, friends, relatives, possessions, riches – anything and everything that might interfere with service for the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>16</sup> There are people that had an experience, such as that of Paul. If his books are read, it becomes clear that he was totally committed to Jesus and what He stood for. Jesus Christ and His cause must become the priority in the life of the disciple of Jesus, nothing else will suffice.

**The reward of discipleship.** Is there any reward for becoming and staying a follower of the Master? In Mark 10:28-31 Jesus gives the reward as “hundredfold now in this time” and eventually “eternal life.” This answer that Jesus comes up with is enlightening, as it is not very often that returns on faithfulness are spelled out. There will definitely be a reward, if not in this life, then in the life to come.

### **Discipleship in the Epistles of Paul**

In the letters of Paul to the churches, discipleship principles are mentioned that need to be extracted. Paul himself was the epitome of a true disciple in that he dedicated himself fully to the One he loved. He, after meeting His Maker on the road to Damascus, devoted his time and effort to getting to know God. He prepared himself for service and then looked for opportunities to share with others what he had learned. He experienced hardship, rejection and even faced death, but he stood for what he believed in. Once he decided that he had seen Jesus, he accepted Him and then lived fully for Him.

**The road to discipleship.** In Paul’s life, the road to discipleship was not easy. It involved difficulty and hardship, but he himself declares that it was worth the effort,

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<sup>16</sup>“So likewise,” *SDABC*, 5:812.

because he sees a “crown of righteousness” that he will receive (2 Tim 4:8). It is also very clear that the reward is not necessarily something that is received in this world. Paul was looking forward to it on the day that Jesus will reappear. He never really had any glory while busy doing the work God had assigned him. The road can be a road of hardship, rejection, and persecution, but the disciple should not shrink from it.

**Total surrender.** The idea of total surrender to God is prevalent in the writings of Paul. In Romans 12:1-2 he makes it very clear that the disciple should lay all on the altar for God and he concludes that even our bodies should be sacrificed to Him. Nothing should be held back so that the disciple can determine God’s will for his life.

Even in Romans 13:14 he charges followers to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh,” only Jesus. He declares explicitly that disciples do not even belong to themselves, but were bought by Jesus and belong to Him (1 Cor 6:20). Real disciples, according to Paul, do everything they do “to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31), in other words, their life is dedicated to God, even when eating and drinking. Paul makes it clear that a surrendered life will cause disciples to live as “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor 5:20). An ambassador represents the country of origin for another country – the disciple must represent Jesus on earth. Paul uses some very clear and vivid imagery when he wants to describe and explain discipleship:

**Soldier.** The soldier that has committed himself to that life does not “entangle himself with the affairs of this life” but is fully committed to warfare (2 Tim 2:3 - 4). Like a soldier, the Christian should “be properly clothed and equipped and on the alert.”<sup>17</sup> No looking back, but being focused on being the best soldier he can be.

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<sup>17</sup>Dybdahl, 1587.

***Athlete.*** Paul also points to the athlete that is entirely committed to competing and sticking to the rules of the game (2 Tim 2:5). Athletes cannot be successful if they do not abide by the rules, neither can they succeed if they do not set everything else aside and concentrate on what they want to achieve. The disciple must also be fully committed to the One who has called him or her.

**Hardship.** Hardship while being a disciple is part of the course, according to Paul. As a soldier, in 2 Timothy 2:3, he again warns that he “must endure hardship.” Soldiers in a war situation cannot always be comfortable; they have to endure difficulties as well. It is part of being a soldier just as hardship is part of being a real disciple of Jesus. Paul is a perfect example of a disciple enduring terrible hardships for the sake of the gospel as he spells out his different afflictions in 2 Corinthians 11:22-27.

**The work of the Holy Spirit.** Although the work of the Holy Spirit comes through in the Bible as a whole, it actually starts (in a more specific manner) in the gospels. John especially records Jesus as He talks about the coming and the function of the Holy Spirit. He calls Him the Comforter, the One who will lead into all righteousness, will make the disciple aware of sin and judgment and many other things.

Luke also tells of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and talks about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He also makes it clear that the Holy Spirit was the one guiding and leading as the apostolic church was being established. Paul expands on this by making it clear that the life of the disciple without the Holy Spirit is dead. In Romans 5:5, Paul declares that “the love of God was poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit brings peace and joy and righteousness (Rom 14:17) through His power. One of the important aspects that Paul highlights is that the Holy Spirit teaches us (1 Cor 2:13) and then he calls those who have the Spirit, spiritual people and those without Him, not spiritual. This confirms that the disciple without the Holy Spirit is not a disciple, actually not even a Christian. Robert Coleman says that the Holy Spirit puts it all together.<sup>18</sup> A fascinating statement by Paul in Ephesians 1:13-14 tells that the disciple is “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” The disciple, filled with the Holy Spirit, is designated the property of God. Also referring to the sealing by the Holy Spirit, Paul talks in Ephesians 4:30 about not grieving the Holy Spirit. This could lead to being lost as it means becoming so hardened that the voice of the Spirit is not heard anymore.<sup>19</sup> Clearly, the Holy Spirit is paramount in the life of the disciple.

**Mentoring.** In the life of Paul, there were some very eminent young people that he took under his wing. Timothy is the prime example of a young man that Paul helped, nurtured and disciplined. In 1 Timothy 4:12 Paul helps Timothy understand that the fact of him being young does not disqualify him from being a disciple. The disciple, committed to Christ, is not prohibited from being a good disciple by age, but Paul realizes that Timothy needs help and advice. Throughout the two letters written to Timothy, the concern and love for this young man is evident. He has this burden to help him to become all that God wants him to be.

Paul also mentored Titus, a co-worker and most probably a convert of Paul that he left on the island of Crete to organize and help the churches there.<sup>20</sup> It becomes

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<sup>18</sup>Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H Revell, 1998), 10.

<sup>19</sup>“Blasphemy”, *SDABC*, 5:395.

<sup>20</sup> Dybdahl, 1591.

clear that Titus was a serious and very helpful partner to Paul and he took him with him on several occasions (Gal 2:1).

**The outcomes of discipleship.** To Paul, the results of discipleship are evident on many levels. He sees a strong relationship between discipleship and the ultimate end of all things. Therefore, there are several items that can be highlighted as the outcome of a life of discipleship.

**Stewardship.** Being a good steward, in the biblical sense, is managing that which God has blessed you with, in a responsible way. It could be possessions, time, talents and money. Paul speaks about this in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, and emphasizes the fact that stewardship must start with a giving of yourself to the Lord (verse 5).

Every person should be liberal in their giving, as their means allow them. Paul then also speaks about being a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:6-8), stressing the fact that it must be a planned act and not just random giving (verse 7). In the book of Titus, Paul again links stewardship with being a leader in the congregation (Titus 1:7).

Discipleship is tied very closely to caring for that which God has bestowed on people in His grace and love.

**Ambassador.** The word “ambassador” is used regarding a government sending someone to represent their country in a foreign country. In the same way, Paul uses the word here. The disciple represents Christ in this world (2 Cor 5:20). As the disciple is sent by Christ, so “one who accepts the ambassador accepts the sender.”<sup>21</sup> The central message here is that there needs to be reconciliation to God by being reconciled to the ambassador or disciple of Jesus Christ. There rests a very real responsibility on the shoulders of the ambassador as he/she could bring his country (Christ’s kingdom) into disrepute and could shame His kingdom.

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<sup>21</sup> Dybdahl, 1522.

**Wholistic living.** Paul strongly promotes a life that is lived to the full but lived with others in mind. In Romans 12:18, after talking about how we should forgive and not take revenge, he cautions that they should “live peaceably with all men.” The life of the disciple is not lived for himself only but touches the lives of others in a profound way (Rom 14:7). In Galatians 5:25-26, he cautions against becoming proud as the disciple lives with the Holy Spirit guiding every step of the way. There will be no jealousy, and no wishing for the life of another that might look better. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) shows that there has been growth and that the Holy Spirit is now bearing fruit. Never does it come from the life of the Christian, but always from the Spirit that has become an indwelling power in the life of the disciple. Paul covers the whole spectrum of the disciple’s life when he refers to what the marriage relationship should be (Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19), what relationships in the family should be (Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21), and he even talks about the master and servant relationship (Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22). He sees the Christian walk as a holistic life of service, surrender, and reconciliation between God and the follower, and also between His followers. He continually brings in the association of Christians with each other (Phil 4:1-7).

The outcome of being a faithful disciple of Jesus is always, in the Pauline epistles, a matter of essentially being citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20), but being in the world.<sup>22</sup> The disciple should be waiting for that day when Jesus will come to fetch them, but it is not a matter of idle waiting, but waiting while working for the Master. That should be the reason for standing for the Lord (Phil 4:1).

**The reward of discipleship.** For Paul, the reward of being a faithful and successful disciple is not the ultimate goal, but he makes it clear that there are rewards

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<sup>22</sup>Kenneth Baker, ed., *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 1810.

to be had. Although he does not often focus on these rewards, they are mentioned throughout his epistles.

***Abraham's seed.*** The Israelites, as promised by God, will descend from the lineage of Abraham (Gen 12:7; 15:1-20). Abraham can, therefore, be called the father of the nation, but as Israel was not faithful to their God, they were therefore rejected as God's special, covenant nation (Dan 9:24; Matt 21:43).

A new Israel was now put in place, an Israel that was not physical, but a people that accepted Jesus as their Saviour (Gal 3:26), and as they become part of Christ's kingdom, they are now "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29). "Christians are Abraham's true, spiritual descendants."<sup>23</sup>

Before God, there is no distinction between race, gender or standing in life; all are part of the kingdom of God and accepted by Him as part of the spiritual nation of Israel (Gal 3:28). In Galatians 4, Paul goes on to describe the benefits of being part of this new group of people that believe in, and accept, Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, their Saviour, and Friend. The disciple is now no longer a slave or a stranger but becomes a son and a daughter of God through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (verse 4, 5). More than that, they receive the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit that dwells in the disciple and directs the life to obedience and fullness of life. Perhaps best of all, the disciple now becomes an "heir of God through Christ" (Gal 4:7). The reward then is not something tangible and present, but it is everlasting life, which means being with Jesus forever and ever.

***Crown of righteousness.*** According to Paul's valedictory in the 2<sup>nd</sup> book of Timothy, he sees those that keep the faith, eventually with a "crown of righteousness" (2 Tim 4:8). He sees the faithful disciples of Jesus obtaining this crown at the return

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<sup>23</sup>Baker, 1785.

of Jesus, which he calls “that Day” (2 Tim 4:8). However, Paul also refers to this crown in Corinthians, where he uses the athlete as describing the Christian race and outcome. He refers to the crown an athlete receives as a “perishable crown,” but the ultimate crown that the faithful will receive who have run the Christian race as the “imperishable” (1 Cor 9:25). With this description, Paul makes it clear that discipline is required from the disciple, but that the reward is definite – a crown of righteousness.

Another reference of Paul to the crown is found in 1 Thessalonians 2:19. Here he refers to the crown, but the true disciple will wear it in “the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming.” Paul sees this as a wonderful benefit and recompense for staying in the race of life and for keeping close to Jesus at all times.

### **Discipleship in John’s Epistles and Revelation**

There is in the epistles of John and the book of Revelation, under his authorship, many references to what a true disciple of Jesus should be (John 6:56; 8:12, 34-36; 14:15; Rev 2:3, 10, 13; 3:10, 20-21; 12:11; 14:12). The fully committed follower of Jesus would stand out, would be visible to the person on the street, and would be an active witness for his Redeemer in the community. John also has some warnings that he gives to disciples and then brings the cost and some promises to those that keep faithful and overcome.

**The distinctive marks of a disciple.** John makes it clear in his writings that there are certain outstanding attributes that the real, honest and faithful follower of Jesus Christ has. He mentions quite a few of these in his works.

**Obedience.** One of the definitive and outstanding marks of a disciple according to John is that the follower is obedient to God’s law. He often remarks on this, and we find in 1 John 2:3, 4 where he says it in so many words.

He then reiterates his statement by stating that if a person would claim to have a relationship with God, but does not keep His commandments, he/she would be seen as a liar. Not commandment-keeping to be saved, though, but an obedience born from a love relationship between the disciple and God. In 1 John 3:22, the writer states that because of the disciples' love and obedience, they also find that their prayers and petitions are heard. There is a relationship of trust and mutual respect between the disciple and the Saviour. John has an interesting statement in 1 John 5:2-3, when he again says that obedience and love for God go together, but then adds that the "commandments are not burdensome." It becomes clear that the fact of the love relationship between the commandment-giver and the commandment-keeper makes obedience not something that is burdensome, but a pleasure. That is the result of an intimate relationship.

In the book of Revelation, John refers to this obedience to the will of God as well. The saints have patience in waiting for their Lord, and while waiting, they are obedient to His commandments (Rev 14:12). It becomes the sign of a real and active follower of Christ that at the end of time they stay closely obedient to Him.<sup>24</sup> Then in the last chapter of Revelation, it is said that "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Rev 22:14). What a picture of the loving, obedient followers of Christ marching through the heavenly gates to spend eternity with God. They are obedient as a result of a relationship and not because they want to be saved by it.

***Loving others.*** The theme of all John's writings is love, and he, therefore, is often called the disciple of love. His focus is on what the result of a loving relationship is when it comes to association with fellow humans. He states many times

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<sup>24</sup>Dybdahl, 1678.

that it results in a loving, caring bond between the disciple and everyone they come in contact with (1 John 3:23). John, quoting Jesus, also sees it as a sign of the real Christian society, “By this, all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Bridges<sup>25</sup> states: “Spiritual fellowship is not a social activity, but a relationship of two or more believers who want to help each other grow in Christ.”

Then John turns this love around and states very clearly that if disciples do not love their fellow human beings, but say they love God, they lie because the two are mutually exclusive; nobody can hate a neighbor and say they love God (1 John 4:20). They see their fellow citizen and hate them, but they say they love God whom they do not see. In John’s mind, this does not make sense.

***Modeling Christ in the Christian walk.*** John is strong on the Christian walk. In 1 John 2:6 he clearly states “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” The best way to walk as Jesus walked, is to daily place the life in the hands of Jesus, and He will show the way. The words “abides in” means “remains in constant close relationship with.”<sup>26</sup>

The answer is to have a continuous communion with Jesus on a daily, even hourly or minute-by-minute basis. John also refers to walking in the truth (2 John 4; 3 John 4), the truth that he and the other disciples taught. Being in close contact with Jesus will always ensure walking in the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>25</sup>Jerry Bridges, *Growing your Faith: How to Mature in Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), 94.

<sup>26</sup>Dybdahl, 1642.

**Warnings to disciples.** John has some stern warnings to the disciples of Jesus in his epistles. The disciple of Jesus cannot just claim to be a follower, but still, do exactly what he did before. There are certain clear and definitive warnings.

***Love for the world.*** In 1 John 2:15-17, John specifically talks about the love for the world and everything that is in the world. If the love of the world is present, then there cannot be a commitment to the Lord. He mentions the precise problems as “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (verse 16). These have the ability to draw the disciple away from the loving arms of the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

***Deceptions.*** John makes it clear that the end is near and that there will be deceptions at this time (1 John 2:18-22). He mentions that the Antichrist will come, and even says that many have already come. He tries to make sure that Christians will identify and deal with such deceptions. Again in 2 John 7-11, he warns believers to beware of the antichrist and identifies them as those “who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh” (verse 7). He even suggests that such people should not be allowed into the house (verse 10). John constantly warns that the disciple of Jesus must be able to distinguish between truth and error (1 John 3:24-4:6). There will be error, as John had already experienced at that stage, and he does not want anybody to be caught out. The spirits should be tested as to their authenticity (1 John 4:1).

**The cost of discipleship.** There is always a cost to being a true and faithful disciple of Jesus, and John points out these costs.

***Persecution.*** In the book of Revelation, John points out that persecution will be part of the follower of Jesus’ life. In Revelation 2:8-11, in describing the church of Smyrna, John makes it clear that there will be persecution. The church of Smyrna was one of the early churches in the second and third centuries, where persecution and

death for faith were part of the Christian life.<sup>27</sup> He also refers to persecution in Revelation 12:13-17 as part of the end-time church's daily existence. Persecution was there in the past, it will be there again at the end of time, but there is a need not to become fearful, as God always has and will always be faithful to His true followers.

***Death.*** There is also the possibility, as before, that death will result from the faith that the disciple stands for. John, in Revelation, refers to death for the sake of standing for the truth (Rev 2:10; 6:8; 12:11). It is possible that death will result, but in all these verses there is a command to stay faithful and true, even if death is the result.<sup>28</sup> The reason for this call to stay true until death is found in Revelation 21:4, where the promise comes that eventually, death will be no more. It is "the last enemy that will be destroyed," according to 1 Corinthians 15:25. The good news is that it will eventually be destroyed, so it should not be feared.

**The promise to overcomers.** John is a positive apostle and therefore has many promises for those that overcome and stand firm to the end. Revelation, especially in the second and third chapters, has these incredible promises to those that overcome.

***To eat from the tree of life.*** Revelation 2:7 promises that the overcomers will eat from the tree of life. This alludes to the Garden of Eden, meaning that things will be restored to what it was in the beginning. The overcomers will be saved; they will see Jesus come, they will enter heaven, eventually inhabit the new earth and be there forever with Jesus.

***Not experience the second death.*** John promises that the overcomer will not experience the second death (Rev 2:11). Eternal life, not eternal death, will be the

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<sup>27</sup>"Smyrna", *SDABC*, 7:753.

<sup>28</sup>Baker, 1932.

reward of those that stay close to Jesus and eventually overcome. He died the second death<sup>29</sup> for humankind, so they just need to stay faithful.

***Receive a new name.*** Jesus promises a new name to those that overcome and John records it in Revelation 2:17. A new name means a character that reflects the character of Jesus.<sup>30</sup> The overcomers will be like Jesus and, eventually will be with Him forever as well.

***Power over the nations.*** Eventually, those that overcome through the blood of the Lamb will be rulers over nations (Rev 2:26), as they will be part of the group that will judge the nations (1 Cor 6:2). A promise of eventual glory to sit with Jesus and judge those that did not accept him.

***Name in the book of life.*** The book of life contains the names of those that will reign with Jesus forever (Rev 20:12), so it is a privilege to be written there. Again, Jesus promises that if His followers stay faithful, their names shall “not be blotted out of the book of life” (Rev 3:5). Faithfulness will ensure a place in that wonderful book that guarantees everlasting life.

***Pillar in the temple of god.*** In Revelation 3:12, the overcomers are promised that they will become pillars in the metaphorical temple of God.<sup>31</sup> Though disciples might be weak and sinful, with the help of Jesus in their lives, they become strong pillars. They will be in the New Jerusalem, the center of the universe.

***Sit on the throne.*** Those that overcome are given the promise of sitting on the throne with Jesus (Rev 3:21). Sitting with Jesus, being with Him, judging the world

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<sup>29</sup> Don F. Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1979), 278.

<sup>30</sup> Dybdahl, 1677.

<sup>31</sup>“A Pillar in the Temple”, *SDABC*, 759.

and being part of the multitude that will be with Him forever, this is what some of the promises are for those that keep faithful till the end.

### **Discipleship and Spirituality in the Writings of Ellen G White**

The writings of Ellen G White are regarded by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as inspired, but not “on the same level as the Scriptures,”<sup>32</sup> or equal to the Scriptures. She herself said<sup>33</sup> that “Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men to the greater light.” So, although this is the case, her writings have been included in this section so that her view on discipleship and spirituality can be assessed. Although not a theologian, God gave her light on what it means to be a disciple and how to live as spiritual beings in our daily lives as Christians.

#### **Definition of Discipleship**

It is very difficult to find in the testimonies<sup>34</sup> one definition, one sentence to describe the disciple of God. Ellen White does not give a definition of discipleship, but as she writes her testimonies and cautions, a clear picture of true discipleship becomes apparent. What becomes obvious as her writings are studied, is that nobody can live out discipleship if they do not have a living, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 258.

<sup>33</sup>White, *A Call to Stand Apart* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 68.

<sup>34</sup>The Seventh-day Adventist name for the writings of E. G White.

<sup>35</sup>White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 9:275.

Disciples must love their Saviour and serve Him every day of their lives. Encouraging is the fact that a true disciple of God is not perfect: “he whose mind is in harmony with the mind of God, while constantly learning, will be teaching as well, leading the minds of others upward, away from the prevailing errors of the world.”<sup>36</sup> The disciple is still learning, still growing in grace, and while learning and teaching others how to stay close to their Master. Other very clear characteristics of a real, honest disciple of Jesus Christ is someone who is witnessing to the goodness and love of God,<sup>37</sup> someone that is not selfish but lives a life of self-sacrifice and self-denial,<sup>38</sup> someone who bears fruit.<sup>39</sup> This fruit that she talks about is the result of a life completely given and lived for God. To summarize, discipleship is the life of a true Christian, lived in close alliance with Jesus Christ.

### **Characteristics of a Disciple**

The characteristics of a disciple of Jesus in the writings of Ellen White needs to be extracted from her writings in the same way as a definition. She constantly mentions the characteristics of a true disciple in her writings.

**Humility.**<sup>40</sup> This is one of the features she often mentions, and she regularly uses it with self-denial and self-sacrifice. The idea is that the follower of Jesus has no pride and will help and assist others as far as possible, even to the point of neglecting

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<sup>36</sup>White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923), 452.

<sup>37</sup>White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 195.

<sup>38</sup>White, *Life Sketches of Ellen White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 246.

<sup>39</sup>White, *A New Life: Revival and Beyond* (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn-Books, 1972), 43.

<sup>40</sup>White, “Search the Scriptures,” *Review and Herald*, July 26, 1892, 585.

themselves. The negative side of humility is self-exaltation, which is the major sin that is attributed to Satan.<sup>41</sup>

**Love for others.**<sup>42</sup> The love that Jesus showed to His fellow human beings will also be the love that true Christians will show to their neighbor. It is a love that spans racial, ethnic and language barriers; it is a love that is the same every day of the life of the follower of Jesus. It does not depend on the other person's response, but just because of loving them.

**Witness about the belief in and rewards of serving Jesus.**<sup>43</sup> She makes it clear that nobody who is truly a disciple of Jesus can keep silent about their faith in God. They have to speak out about His goodness, His many blessings on a daily basis and His loving care for them. They want to constantly tell of all these things so that others can also experience His tender love.

**Shining as a living witness.**<sup>44</sup> Persons who are dedicated to Jesus as disciples, live out their discipleship wherever they are. They are therefore a witness without even opening their mouths. This is how she says it<sup>45</sup>: “They need not try to shine; if their hearts are enlightened by Christ, they cannot help shining.”

**Obedience.** The words “obedience is the true sign of discipleship,”<sup>46</sup> say it all. This is not a blind obedience to the Ten Commandments but is a result of a love

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<sup>41</sup> “Above the Stars of God”, *SDABC*, 4: 171.

<sup>42</sup> White, *This Day with God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1979), 25.

<sup>43</sup> White, “So Have I Sent Them,” *Review and Herald*, 16 April 1908, 8.

<sup>44</sup> White, *The Faith I Live By* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 304.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 226.

relationship with Jesus Christ. It flows from a heart that overflows with gladness for an achieved salvation.

**Bearing fruit.** Just as the Bible points out that the result of being a disciple is fruit bearing, so we find that Ellen White does the same.<sup>47</sup> She constantly talks about the natural outflow of a dedicated life which will result in visible works as the result of faith in God's work.

### **The Cost of Discipleship**

The cost of discipleship is very clearly understood by Ellen White. She often refers to it and expands on it.

**Could cost one's life.** One of the results of a life of discipleship could be that the disciple loses his life.<sup>48</sup> She explains further that this is what Jesus had to go through, so why would we think that we have to do less. It is not as common as at some times in the history of the Christian church, but there are many places where persecution and death are still the results of living a committed Christian life.

**Leaving the world.** In the book *Evangelism*, Ellen White<sup>49</sup> says that we should "come out from the world and be separate." This could be quite a cost for some who are used to the pleasures and the allurements of worldly sport, recreation, and pleasure. This was said in the context of baptism. So there are things that cannot be taken into this new life of serving God.

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<sup>47</sup>White, "Words of Counsel," *Australasian Union Conference Record*, November 15, 1903, par 10.

<sup>48</sup>White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1940), 288.

<sup>49</sup>White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 311.

**Denial of self.** Ellen White states that the Christian will have to deny self if he or she wants to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.<sup>50</sup> There are many things that the true disciple will have to deny himself or herself to follow fully in the footsteps of Jesus.

**Giving sacrificially.** The disciple might find herself/himself with less of this world's things as a result of the Lord's guidance. She states, "He who is truly converted will feel it a privilege to give of his means to send the truth into the dark places of the earth."<sup>51</sup>

### **Obstacles to Discipleship**

**Cherished evil.** Ellen White<sup>52</sup> states that this is one of the things that is a real obstacle for the disciple. "It is not the opposition of the world that most endangers the Church of Christ. It is the evil cherished in the hearts of believers that works their most grievous disaster and most inevitably retards the progress of God's cause." Evil needs to be repented of and left behind when we become spiritually attached to God.

**Keeping the mind clear.** In the book, *Counsels for the Church*, Ellen White talks about reading material that can destroy the follower of Jesus' spirituality.<sup>53</sup> Disciples should be careful of anything that will draw their minds away from God and His Word. Such reading material makes the daily living of discipleship so much more of a problem.

**Intemperance.** Anything that will be deleterious to the health of the body should be shunned.<sup>54</sup> The committed Christian is also a temperate person that knows

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<sup>50</sup>White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1977), 2:380.

<sup>51</sup>White, "Evidences of Discipleship," *Review and Herald*, February 4, 1904, 8.

<sup>52</sup>White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 549.

<sup>53</sup>White, *Counsels for the Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1991), 169.

<sup>54</sup>White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923), 67.

that a healthy body is vital as it also influences the mind. The follower of Jesus should always be aware of the health message given to the church of God.

**Riches.** Ellen White<sup>55</sup> makes some interesting remarks about the effect that money can have on the spirituality of the Christian. “Throughout the ages, riches, and honor have been attended with much peril to humility and spirituality.” How careful the follower of Christ should be not to imperil his/her everlasting life by the love of money. The writings of Ellen G White are in complete harmony with Scripture in describing what a disciple of Jesus is, what the problems are and how the follower of Jesus can keep the life committed to God. It is not only a matter of saying that love and grace are beautiful, but one’s life has not come into harmony with Jesus’ sinless life. God expects of His true children a full commitment

### **Summary**

The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy give guidance to the disciple of Jesus on how to practice spiritual discipline and how to navigate on the discipleship journey. Both give the follower of Jesus tools to lead us on the path of a spiritual partnership with Jesus, by the love of God and the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit. Never can the searching believer blame a lack of resources and knowledge for not being an ardent disciple and spiritual giant for the Lord.

The information is there for the taking; the knowledge is there to be used, the helping hand of the Triune God is there to guide on the discipleship journey. It is a matter of prayer, study, commitment and, perhaps most important of all, an intimate, day to day walk with our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

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<sup>55</sup>White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1940), 147.

## **A Summary of Some Key Concepts**

**Stewardship** – According to Rees<sup>56</sup>, “Stewardship is a relationship that every person bears to his Creator.” A steward is seen as a manager to someone. The Greek word is “oikonomon.” According to Towner<sup>57</sup> “It was expected that he would execute his duties to the fullest of his mater’s wishes. Stewardship was not an appointment that one took up or laid down at ones’ own pleasure.” It was something done with oversight, faithfulness, and commitment.

**Disciple** – Bruinsma<sup>58</sup> gives a very simple but key definition: “Being a disciple is following a master.” Disciples of Jesus follow Him. A pupil engaged in learning and has a relationship with a teacher. Bromley<sup>59</sup> says the following about it. A disciple, “mathetes,” and a disciple maker “matheteuo,” are two words used in this regard. A disciple is someone engaged in learning.

**Discipleship** – Discipleship is all about being a learner, with Christ as teacher, imitating how He lived and caring for other members of the faith community.<sup>60</sup>

**Spiritual or Spirituality** - Bromley<sup>61</sup> says that it comes from the root word, “pneuma,” which is spirit, and spiritual is then “pneumatikos.” He goes on to say: “The spirit shapes the whole existence, not as a natural possession, but as God’s abiding Spirit. Thus the term full of the Spirit means a lasting union. So to be spiritual

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<sup>56</sup>Mel Rees, *Basic Stewardship Manual* (Church Ministries, 1990), 3.

<sup>57</sup>Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 687.

<sup>58</sup>Reinder Bruinsma, *Key Words of the Christian Faith* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2008), 104.

<sup>59</sup>Geoffrey W. Bromley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 887.

<sup>60</sup>Bruinsma, 106.

<sup>61</sup>Bromley, 195.

is to have a lasting relationship with God and to have His Holy Spirit in us.” A spiritual person is filled with the Holy Spirit. In the following section, other authors will be studied and some guidance on discipleship and spirituality sought. Spiritual authors have the leading of the Holy Spirit as well, so much wisdom can be gained by the study of these writers.

## CHAPTER 3

### DISCIPLESHIP AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE LITERATURE

After studying discipleship in the Bible and the writings of Ellen G White, the study of discipleship, spirituality, and mentorship will now continue, as the literature on these topics is integrated. According to Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus told His disciples to go out and make disciples. God's church, as His disciples in this end-time era, should also go out and make disciples, but they need to be disciples first. It is in the writings of selected authors on this topic that many excellent quotes, lessons, and examples of how ministers should go about living as disciples and disciple-makers for Jesus are found.

Using above mentioned Scripture, Coleman<sup>1</sup> says it well: "The Great Commission is not a special calling or a gift of the Spirit; it is a command – an obligation incumbent upon the whole community of faith. There are no exceptions. Bank presidents and automobile mechanics, physicians and school teachers, theologians and homemakers – everyone who believes on Christ has a part in His work." Now it is necessary to find out what the part is that every disciple has in the work of God, and how to go about fulfilling this command.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming G. Revell, 1998), 10.

## Discipleship

A basic definition of discipleship has been given, but it needs to be unpacked some more. Being a disciple is a way of life, as Jones and Armstrong<sup>2</sup> suggest: “Christian discipleship involves the whole of our lives, not just one particular gift or set of skills. It is a lifelong process of unlearning sin and learning holiness.” This means that we start living as disciples on a daily basis, not just on the day we go to church. It becomes part of who we are. Warner<sup>3</sup> states it slightly differently when he says: “Discipleship means a complete, continuing and lifelong submission to the priorities of Christ.” It is a relationship with the One who died to save each one of His created beings. Never do we leave His side.

Dodson says that a disciple of Jesus has to learn and relate to the gospel, but then also communicates this gospel to others.<sup>4</sup> Being a disciple is all about the gospel, which of course means that it is the good news of a risen Savior.<sup>5</sup> A disciple lives, but also tells of this life that (s)he lives; the disciple cannot keep quiet about discipleship. Putman, Harrington, and Coleman<sup>6</sup> say the following about discipleship: “The ideal life is focused on Jesus. It is not just trusting him but also truly following him. To focus on him is to live a fulfilling life. It is about becoming more and more like him in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God. To be conformed into Jesus’ likeness is the goal (Rom 8:29). The word for this is *discipleship*.” The life of the true disciple-

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<sup>2</sup> L. Gregory Jones and Kevin Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2006), 53.

<sup>3</sup> Warner, *I Believe in Discipleship: The Adventure of Living*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan K. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 38.

<sup>5</sup> Don F. Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1979), 429.

<sup>6</sup> Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman, *Discipleship: Five Steps that Help Your Church to Make Disciples who make Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 31.

maker for God is one that is entirely in line with the life of Jesus. David Watson in his book *Discipleship*, states the following: “We must never restrict discipleship to religious events when we gather together for prayer, Bible study or evangelism. It is the sharing of our lives together.”<sup>7</sup> Again the idea that it is not a once-a-week event that happens as the disciple goes to worship, but a relationship, not only with God but also with his or her fellow human beings who share fellowship together.

However, discipleship is also about growing spiritually. Never can the follower of Jesus say that they are now where they need to be – perfect; it is a process. Storbakken<sup>8</sup> summarizes it well when he states: “Discipleship is for the ardent and devout seeker of God who hopes to be more like Jesus in every area of his or her life. It is for the humble and teachable Christian sister and brother who recognize that to grow spiritually they must lean on others who have more wisdom, experience, and maturity.”

Therefore, it is a way of life, becoming more and more like Jesus within life’s trials and problems. Leaning on others could, however, be dangerous as “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Warner<sup>9</sup> also talks about the growth that needs to take place and calls it “whole-life discipleship.” By that, as he applies it to marriage in the Christian life, he means<sup>10</sup>, “applying timeless biblical principles to the marriages of the world of today and tomorrow, not trying to raise yesterday from the dead.” Again the idea comes out very clearly that discipleship is a lifestyle that is applied to every part of the Christian life. He then also couples the

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<sup>7</sup> David Watson, *Discipleship* (Suffolk, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981), 92.

<sup>8</sup> Jason Storbakken, *Radical Spirituality: Repentance, Resistance, Revolution* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 14.

<sup>9</sup> Warner, 56.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

idea of growing and whole-life discipleship with giving and comments<sup>11</sup>: “Our giving is an expression of whole-life discipleship. We give in thankfulness. We give to relieve suffering. We give to maximize the strategic impact and advance of the gospel in this generation. Moreover, we can give in the joyous confidence that it is utterly impossible for His disciples ever to out-give the crucified God.” It boils down to a life that is completely changed to reflect the life of Christ; unselfish, always giving and loving sinners unconditionally.

Bill Hull<sup>12</sup>, summarizes discipleship in this way: “A disciple, then, is a reborn follower of Jesus.” That says it all – a child of Christ. Hull<sup>13</sup> then continues and points out: “The vision of Jesus set into motion meant finding and training more people like the Eleven, a lifelong experience where imperfect people would be shaped into his likeness – marked by progress, not perfection. A disciple, then, is the normal Christian who follows Christ.”

A normal Christian then does not believe in perfection, but in progress towards being more and more like the Savior. There seems to be a tendency among many that, the ideal is perfection and that this is the goal. Hull, and the Bible writers agree that it is progressing towards another goal; being more like Christ as you grow spiritually. White<sup>14</sup> mentions this about the topic: “The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual

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<sup>11</sup>Warner, 174-175.

<sup>12</sup> Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 32.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>14</sup>Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 57.

words and acts.” It becomes clear that it has all to do with the direction of the life at the time that is important, not the individual acts. Bridges<sup>15</sup> elaborates:

The term growing in grace is most often used to indicate growth in Christian character. While I think that usage has merit, a more accurate meaning is continually to grow in our understanding of God’s grace, especially as it applies to us personally, to become progressively more aware of our own continued spiritual bankruptcy and the unmerited, unearned, and undeserved favor of God.

God does it all, and the disciple must cooperate with Him. There is, however, need to mention in more detail the role that the Holy Spirit plays in discipleship.

Dodson<sup>16</sup> calls it the “most neglected motivation for discipleship,” and then elaborates by saying that disciples of Jesus have the Holy Spirit inside of them, guiding their steps. The Godhead is involved in every move the disciple of Jesus makes. Bridges<sup>17</sup> brings out the role of the Holy Spirit so well when he asserts:

So spiritual growth very much involves our activity. But his is an activity that must be carried out in dependence on the Holy Spirit. It is not a partnership with the Spirit in the sense that we each – the believer and the Holy Spirit – do our respective tasks. Rather, we work as He enables us to work. His work lies behind all our work and makes our work possible.

This is a clear indication that the disciple of Christ cannot do discipleship without the continual infilling and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the life. Clearly, our bodies are a place where the Holy Spirit lives and directs the life.

The Christian leader or pastor has an added responsibility to be a disciple and disciple-maker. Coleman<sup>18</sup> states it as follows: “Example gives credibility to leadership. People are far more impressed by what they see than by what they hear.”

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<sup>15</sup> Jerry Bridges, *Growing Your Faith: How to Mature in Faith* (Colorado Springs, CA: NavPress, 2004), 33.

<sup>16</sup> Dodson, 87.

<sup>17</sup> Bridges, 84.

<sup>18</sup> Coleman, 71.

What a fearsome responsibility this places on the Christian leader! For the Christian leader, the following statement is perhaps the one that helps the most<sup>19</sup>. “We are dependent upon the righteousness of Christ for our acceptance with God, and we are reliant on the power of Christ for our ability to pursue spiritual growth.” It is not what the spiritual leader does; it is not who the spiritual leader is; it is who Jesus is and what He does in the life of the trailblazer that counts. The person has to submit to the leading of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. In his book, *Practicing Greatness*, Reggie McNeal<sup>20</sup> has this to contribute on the leader in God’s cause, and how he or she should pursue greatness:

Genuinely great spiritual leaders do not do what they do for themselves or even as a way to become recognized as great leaders. The end game for spiritual leaders is about expanding the kingdom of God. They pursue greatness because they are passionate about God and about helping other people experience the life of God intended for them to enjoy. In the end, great spiritual leaders are not interested in calling attention to themselves. They point people to a great God.

The disciple who is also a leader in God’s cause is never a leader because of what he or she can get out of it. They are there because they love God and His kingdom, and want to expand that kingdom. Bridges<sup>21</sup> states it very clearly: “Along with a sense of profound gratitude to God for His grace, we should be motivated to grow and obey God by a deep sense of reverence for Him.” Never must the disciple forget who and what God is in relation to whom and what the human being is.

The true disciple of Jesus Christ tells and makes other disciples, and disciples grow by multiplication rather than reproduction<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Bridges, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Practicing Greatness: Seven Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 8.

<sup>21</sup> Bridges, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Hull, 28.

Rather discipleship occurs when a transformed person radiates Christ to those around her. It happens when people so deeply experience God's love that they can do nothing other than affect those around them. The heart of being a disciple involves living in intimate union and daily contact with Christ. Discipleship – the effort both to be a disciple and to make other disciples – is about the immense value of God at work in one individual's life and the resulting impact on other lives.

This is so important that the idea of disciple-making is highlighted again. If every disciple makes a disciple, growth is just phenomenal. It is all about relationships and love, as Putman<sup>23</sup> et al. state:

Jesus not only told us to make disciples but also gave us a model to follow in doing so. I believe that most Christians have divorced the teachings of Jesus from the methods of Jesus, and yet they expect the results of Jesus. I believe his methods are just as divine as his teachings. He showed us that the fundamental methodology in making disciples is relationships grounded in truth and love. Jesus is the greatest disciple maker in history, and his way works. Discipleship is the emphasis. Relationships are the method. Jesus invited people into relationships with himself; he loved them and in the process showed them how to follow God. His primary method was life-on-life.

Again we find an emphasis on relationships in making and keeping disciples for the Kingdom of God. The relationship with God is essential, the relationship with other humans follow.

### **Characteristics of a True Disciple**

As the true disciple of Jesus walks with God, there is a change in his or her life, and certain godly characteristics become visible. In his book, *The Practice of Godliness*, Jerry Bridges gives some powerful indicators of what a real godly disciple of Jesus will look like.

The following quotes will all come from his work. He names the following characteristics of a true disciple of Jesus:

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<sup>23</sup>Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *Discipleship*, 33.

## **Humility**

“Humility manifests itself in our relationships – to God, to ourselves, to others. We are to be humble toward God and His Word, humble in regard to trials and blessings that come our way or abilities and achievements with which we are blessed, and humble toward other people.”<sup>24</sup> The Bible characters discussed in chapter two have perhaps one distinguishing mark, and that is humility. All real, godly disciples of Jesus will be humble people who give God all the honor and glory for who they are and what they do. Jesus, of course, is the ultimate humble servant leader that we have to emulate.

## **Contentment**

This is one of the distinguishing marks of a true disciple, as a disciple does not focus on possessions, bank balance or other externals, but on God. It is when the Christian has a twisted focus on “things” that (s)he will trust more on the “things” than on Jesus. When God is left out of the picture, an unbalanced life is the result. Bridges goes on to elaborate: “This is the secret to being content: to learn and accept that we live daily by God’s unmerited favor given through Christ and that we can respond to any and every situation by His divine enablement through the Holy Spirit.” Contentment is being satisfied with the life Jesus has given to the disciple, whatever that may be.

## **Thankfulness**

“Thankfulness to God is a recognition that God in His goodness and faithfulness has provided for us and cared for us, both physically and spiritually. It is a recognition that we are totally dependent upon Him – that all we are and have comes

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<sup>24</sup>Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2008), 75.

from God.” Being thankful for every blessing and being thankful, how hard it may be, for the difficulties that come the way of the disciple, is what it is all about. God is truly in control of every facet of the disciple’s life and controls it all.

### **Joy**

“So the choice is ours. We can be joyless Christians, or we can be joyful Christians. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. It is a result of His work, but it is also something we must do. We must, by His power, rejoice. This is a part of the practice of godliness.” There are so many unhappy Christians in this world while being happy and joyful, are signs of a true, godly disciple. Paul admonishes the disciple in Philippians 4:4 when he says: “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

### **Self-control**

This word could also be seen as restraint, or being disciplined. “Self-control is the exercise of inner strength under the direction of sound judgment that enables us to do, think, and say the things that are pleasing to God.” This is a very difficult characteristic, but it is something that the disciple who, living in close connection with God, will also gain.

### **Peace**

Bridges explains this concept of peace by saying that it should be part of the disciple’s life because Jesus promised peace for the Christian believer (John 14:27). Whatever circumstances the godly disciple is in, there should be peace in his or her heart. Again, there should be total dependence on the God of all peace. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit and is, therefore, an “evidence of His working in our lives.” Peace should be part of our character also because God has promised us His peace, because He has

commanded us to let peace rule in our lives and relationships, and because peace is a fruit of the spirit and therefore an evidence of His working in our lives.

### **Holiness**

Bridges<sup>25</sup> says that holiness is also one of the signs of a godly disciple and concludes that, “Holiness is conformity to the character of God.” This is not perfectionism but is becoming more and more like Jesus as there is growth in discipleship.

### **Loving One Another**

Bridges brings in the aspect of love as he speaks of the spiritual growth of a disciple.<sup>26</sup> The love for God must be seen in the relationship that the disciple has with his or her brothers and sisters in the church, at home and in the workplace. Jesus also made the assertion that the Ten Commandments can be summarized as, first, love for God, but the second is that we should love our neighbor (Matt 22:39). So as there is growth in the Christian life, love for fellow humans becomes apparent.

Coleman<sup>27</sup> puts it all in perspective when he admits: “The Holy Spirit puts it all together. What God administers as the Father and reveals as the Son, He accomplishes as the Third Member of the Trinity. It is finally God’s work, not ours. We are merely the channel through which the Spirit of Christ makes disciples.” This seems very simple and easy for the disciple, but the problem lies in submitting the will to that of God. It is a daily, hourly exercise, which the true disciple has to go

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<sup>25</sup>Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 119

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>27</sup>Coleman, 132.

through. Dr. Gary Smalley<sup>28</sup>, in his book, *Your Relationship with God*, mentions the following: “God is at work in every aspect of life. He knows what is going to happen now and throughout eternity. I take great comfort in God’s sovereignty. No matter what I might experience that I don’t understand, I know that God is working it out for my ultimate good and for the good of others. I give him complete control.” A wonderful observation, but very true and very difficult to achieve practically in a sinful person and a sinful world.

All of these observations on discipleship are important, but there is an ingredient that must always be present – balance; a balanced Christian life. James Coffin<sup>29</sup> puts it succinctly as he says, “As with all things in the Christian experience, balance is the key. Some people spend much time analyzing how the spiritual equation should be balanced. Moreover, they have their complicated theories even on how the balance should be described. However, unless the balance is reflected in our lives, the theory is empty and of little use.” In all disciples do, they need to be balanced Christians, as Jesus was a balanced individual in the spiritual, mental, physical and social sides of His life.

### **Spirituality and Discipleship**

In this dissertation, spirituality and discipleship are used as synonyms, but let literature give the description. Bloesch<sup>30</sup> gives this definition of the term spirituality:

True spirituality entails sacrifice of the self for the good of our neighbor and the glory of God. It means serving the despised and forsaken of the world for

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<sup>28</sup>Gary Smalley, *Your Relationship with God: Growing Closer to God Every Day* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006), 76.

<sup>29</sup>James Coffin, *One Thing I Know (And Other Stuff I Strongly Suspect)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2003), 106.

<sup>30</sup>Donald G. Bloesch, *Spirituality Old & New: Recovering Authentic Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 29.

the sake of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and rose again so that all might live. It entails letting the light of God's glory as we see this in Jesus Christ shine in every aspect of our existence. It implies not flight from the world but instead bringing the world into submission to Jesus Christ.

The disciple is a spiritual being who does not only do everything he does to the glory of God, but he serves others because he has become more like Jesus. The idea of service to others has now come into his or her life, and it just flows forth. It is, therefore, crucial not to become a recluse, but to serve God in the community where the disciple resides – service to others. “Biblical spirituality is the following of the God-given ways of working to restore the relationship with God now and paving the way to final restoration in a new heaven and earth.”<sup>31</sup>

God-given ways will be pursued when spiritual disciplines are discussed, but it means working on broken relationships. Jerry Bridges,<sup>32</sup> relating spirituality to godliness, claims that every believer needs to strive for godliness. He states that it is the privilege of the disciple to become godly – like God. He then says that the Christian leader and disciple need to study the practice of godliness for him or herself. Godliness, or spirituality, or being a disciple, is learning the art of becoming more like the Redeemer. Bridges<sup>33</sup> then goes further and says that “The practice of godliness is an exercise or discipline that focuses upon God.”

### **Spiritual Disciplines**

This then brings us to the matter of spiritual disciplines that help us grow closer to God. However, Bridges cautions that the only motive for spiritual disciplines

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<sup>31</sup>Jon L. Dybdahl, “Spirituality: Biblical and Nonbiblical – Part 1 of 2,” *Ministry*, October 2015, 21.

<sup>32</sup>Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, 14.

<sup>33</sup>Bridges, 16.

must be our absolute “devotion to God.”<sup>34</sup> It is so easy for a spiritual discipline to become a means of gaining access and favor with God to be saved. This can never be, as the Christian is saved by the grace of God through Jesus Christ alone. It is a reaction to salvation that causes the disciple to do what he or she does, because of salvation. Grear<sup>35</sup> says the following: “If you understand the gospel, however, then you can practice the spiritual disciplines as God intends: as gateways to the gospel, not as substitutes for the gospel.

The more we taste of the gospel, the more we love it. And the more we learn to love the things of God, the more time we’ll spend doing those things, less by discipline and more by desire.” This is the way spiritual disciplines should be practiced. Donald Whitney<sup>36</sup> elaborates on the idea of the disciplines and states the following: “The spiritual disciplines are those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.” It is to become more orderly in the way disciples serve and live out godliness or in becoming disciple-makers. It is to organize the spiritual life, not to mark off certain duties, and to be more effective in serving the Lord and others. Matthew Myer Boulton<sup>37</sup> summarizes as he talks about the spiritual disciplines as practices, “Each practice is carried out not only as an end in itself but also and pre-eminently as a means of

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<sup>34</sup>Bridges, 58.

<sup>35</sup>J. D. Grear, *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity* (Nashville, TN: B & H, 2011), 202-203.

<sup>36</sup>Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014), 17.

<sup>37</sup>Matthew, M. Boulton, John Calvin, *Practical Formation and the Future of Protestant Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans, 2011), 224.

building and living a wholly Christian life.” The Christian feels compelled, to come closer to the Redeemer, to follow Christian disciplines.

Whitney then goes on to say that if the disciple neglects the disciplines, there is not a chance of bearing spiritual fruit, which of course is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).<sup>38</sup> This is true, but it is actually spiritual stagnation or zero spiritual growth. No spiritual growth resembles spiritual death in the long run. The following quotation from a Christian writer<sup>39</sup> summarizes it well: “Spiritual growth occurs as a result of intentional and appropriate effort. The word intentional implies a diligent pursuit of a clear goal. Appropriate indicates that we must see the God-given ways of growth given to us in the Bible. We usually refer to these ways of growth as spiritual disciplines.” Therefore, the disciple needs to be just as focused and calculated as anything else he/she wants to do well in life. To achieve this, there are also spiritual disciplines to help in the life of Christ.

An author like Whitney, also calls them spiritual exercises<sup>40</sup>, which gives the idea that it is something that must be done regularly to stay spiritually fit. However, it is not something that is done for salvation. It is done because salvation has already been attained through a relationship with God. Gear<sup>41</sup> argues: “The more we taste of the gospel, the more we love it. And the more we learn to love the things of God, the more time we’ll spend doing those things, less by discipline and more by desire.” What are spiritual disciplines? Whitney<sup>42</sup> has this to contribute: “Think of spiritual

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>39</sup>Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 17.

<sup>40</sup>Whitney, 18.

<sup>41</sup>Gear, 203.

<sup>42</sup>Whitney, 19.

disciplines as ways we can place ourselves in the path of God’s grace and seek Him like Bartimaeus (Luke 18) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19).”

The disciple gets close to God in a love relationship and in an effort to come closer, will perform these disciplines. Jerry Bridges<sup>43</sup> emphasizes the following fact: “Thus, our desire to grow and to please God is not truly good unless it is motivated by a love for God and a desire to glorify Him. However, we cannot have such a Godward motivation if we think we must earn God’s favor by our disciplines, or if we fear we may forfeit God’s favor by our lack of them.” It is so important that it be reiterated that disciplines do not earn favor with God, but comes from a heart overflowing with love for the Savior. Gula<sup>44</sup> echoes the stance on spiritual disciplines, which he calls spiritual practices: “We engage in spiritual practices primarily to show our love for God and to deepen our relationship with God. They are truly acts of worship, first of all.” Very clear that these are never, and should never be to earn salvation, but because of a saving relationship with God.

Jones and Armstrong<sup>45</sup> link growth in spirituality with disciplines: “The lifelong learning of discipleship involves our being immersed in Christian practices – formative activities. These include such activities as singing, praying, and learning Scripture and doctrine – staples of our gathered life – as well as hospitality, forgiveness and creating and caring for institutions.” The word that is used here describes it well – formative activities. It forms the Christian in his or her spiritual walk with God. Some authors refer to spiritual formation when speaking about

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<sup>43</sup>Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 27.

<sup>44</sup> Richard M. Gula, *Just Ministry: Professional Ethics for Pastoral Ministers* (Mahwah: NJ, Paulist Press, 2010), 77.

<sup>45</sup>Jones and Armstrong, 54.

spiritual disciplines. In this vane, Storbakken<sup>46</sup> states: “We must return to a model of church that has a focus on the spiritual formation of the individual as well as the collective.”

The real danger is that spiritual disciplines become just another way of assuring church members that they are fine and nothing else is needed. Gula<sup>47</sup> challenges with the following: “When engaged with the right intention, spiritual practices like these have the power to form our imagination, emotions, and dispositions so that our experiences of loving God and being loved by God can give rise to moral sensibilities that will extend the range of love’s influence around the world.” Spiritual disciplines help the Christian to be more effective in reaching the world, as he or she is growing, a sensible Christian in a living, growing relationship with God.

Henry Nouwen<sup>48</sup>, the Catholic priest, and 20<sup>th</sup>-century writer points out the following as he calls for spiritual discipline: “The goal of spiritual direction is spiritual formation – the ever-increasing capacity to live a spiritual life from the heart. A spiritual life cannot be formed without discipline, practice, and accountability.” A strong statement, but with which no one can find fault. Nothing is gained easily in life. Hull states that people who have received Jesus as Savior, start taking on the attributes of Jesus and that this is the process of spiritual discipline or spiritual formation.<sup>49</sup> He sees it as all by grace. Jesus is the One that causes the change, not the

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<sup>46</sup>Storbakken, 23.

<sup>47</sup>Gula, 78.

<sup>48</sup> Henry Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith* (Broadway, NY; HarperCollins, 2006), Xii.

<sup>49</sup>Hull, 18.

disciple. There are many of these spiritual disciplines, but for this study, only some have been chosen and will be discussed.

### **Bible Study**

It is Whitney<sup>50</sup> who makes the following statement: “No spiritual discipline is more important than the intake of God’s Word.” Bridges agrees when he states that, “The primary means of growth God has given us is His Word.”<sup>51</sup> There is a need to find joy and contentment in reading, studying and getting to understand the Bible as the inspired Word of God. This cannot happen without taking it in hand and studying it diligently. Whitney brings out a simple fact: “The easiest of the disciplines related to the intake of God’s Word is simply hearing it.”<sup>52</sup> Just reading aloud, listening to a CD, or getting someone to read the Word of God has great impact.

It is not only reading or studying but perhaps one aspect of immersing oneself in the Bible is to memorize and meditate on God’s Word.<sup>53</sup> Ellen White<sup>54</sup> emphasizes this where she writes:

May God help us to understand that we must be laborers together with Him. Let us begin right here to be co-workers with Heaven. Let us put away the foolish reading-matter, and study the Word of God. Let us commit its precious promises to memory, so that, when we are deprived of our Bibles, we may still be in possession of the Word of God. Let us cultivate the attributes of earnestness, bringing into all our labors for others the simplicity of true godliness. When this experience of overcoming is ours, our labors for others will not be without fruit. Our position in life may be ever so humble, but through the co-operation of heavenly agencies, we may take with us through

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<sup>50</sup>Hull, 28.

<sup>51</sup>Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 61.

<sup>52</sup>Whitney, 59.

<sup>53</sup>Whitney, 41.

<sup>54</sup>Ellen G. White, “At the Iowa and Kansas Camp-Meetings,” *Review and Herald*, January 6, 1910, 8.

the gates of the city of God many who have accepted the truth through our efforts.

Getting close to God by studying, reading, memorizing and meditating on His word, is the basis for a relationship with Him. It is Whitney<sup>55</sup> who encourages Christians by the following words: “Experience the joy of discovering biblical insights firsthand through your own Bible study,” and then states that the disciple of Jesus needs to follow a reading plan. What it boils down to is that the Bible student must immerse her/himself in the Scriptures, by any means possible. In an article in *Ministry* magazine, Ajibade<sup>56</sup> says: “In other words, by studying the Bible with the love of God in our hearts, we experience a closer walk with God and more fully reveal the beauty of His character to those around us.”

## **Prayer**

Prayer is one of the means of starting a meaningful relationship with the Savior. Coleman<sup>57</sup> puts it succinctly when he states: “Whether in private supplication or in their fellowship together, the Christians are a praying people.” Whitney is clear when he says: “When there is little awareness of real need there is little real prayer.”<sup>58</sup> Ellen White<sup>59</sup> has this to say about prayer: “Prayer is the channel of communication between our souls and God. God speaks to us through His word; we respond to Him through our prayers, and He always listens to us. We cannot weary or burden Him by our frequent heart to heart communications.” Prayer can happen anywhere, anytime

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<sup>55</sup>Whitney, 37.

<sup>56</sup>Onaolapp Ajibade, “A Closer Walk with God: The Role Played by Bible Study,” *Ministry*, January 2014, 27.

<sup>57</sup>Coleman, 90.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 69.

<sup>59</sup>Ellen G. White, *Prayer* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2002), 1.

and will not be a burden to our Lord. Prayer in the Christian life must be an ongoing dialogue with his or her Maker. He is always available. Bridges<sup>60</sup> elaborates: “Prayer is the tangible expression of our dependence.

Our prayers of dependence should be of two types: planned periods of prayer and unplanned, spontaneous prayer.” So, although prayer should be a planned discipline for our daily consideration, it can be done at any time and place. Communication with loved ones is not always at scheduled times of the day. Often it happens spontaneously. Ellen White<sup>61</sup> speaks about prayer and says it is “the opening of the heart to God as to a friend.” What a thought; to think of prayer as just a conversation with a Friend. And often it is made so complex and formal! She also includes.<sup>62</sup>

Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted and the health of the soul preserved. Prayer brings the heart in immediate contact with the Wellspring of life, and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the religious experience. Neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, now and then, as seems convenient, and you lose your hold on God. The spiritual faculties lose their vitality, the religious experience lacks health and vigor.

Just as poor communication between spouses will lead to estrangement, so neglecting to talk to God, will cause a decline in spiritual life. Nouwen<sup>63</sup> points out the following about prayer: “Introspection and contemplative prayer is the ancient discipline by which we begin to see God in our heart. ... praying is not only listening *to* but listening *with* the heart.” An interesting view of what prayer can be and do for

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<sup>60</sup>Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 86-87.

<sup>61</sup>White, *Prayer*, 8.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>63</sup>Nouwen, xiv.

the true disciple of God. Listening with the heart is most probably experiencing God in a very real way while praying to Him.

There needs to be caution about contemplative prayer, as it is not emptying the mind. Real prayer and meditation is using the mind to think about the truths of the Bible and God's goodness. Ogden<sup>64</sup> declares praying as: "Prayer is transparent dialogue. It is the way we have an intimate conversation with the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of our lives, who is wild about spending time with us. Prayer is a relationship with the One who has already declared us his beloved children and who wants to be close to us." These are beautiful statements about what God has in store for the believer and what a relationship with Him means. In summary, Kent Hughes<sup>65</sup> calls for continual prayer and makes the statement that all can participate, not only clergy. He calls it "an inner dialogue"<sup>66</sup> with the Lord. It is a continuous communication with the One who did everything for us.

Greg Ogden<sup>67</sup> has this to say: "The twin disciplines of prayer and Bible reading have been promoted as the activities that should dominate a believer's daily devotional practice." Bible study and prayer are two components of spiritual life that should not be separated and will lead to spiritual growth, spiritual maturity and spiritual discipline.

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<sup>64</sup>Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove: IL, InterVarsity Press, 2007), 49.

<sup>65</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton: IL, Crossway Books, 2001), 98.

<sup>66</sup>Hughes, 66.

<sup>67</sup>Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 33.

## Fasting

Fasting is another of the spiritual disciplines that is available. Although it is one that is not often used in modern Christianity, it can be useful for the devoted Christian. A religious reason for fasting is explained as follows<sup>68</sup>: “The chief benefit to be obtained from fasting is clarity of mind that comes with complete or partial abstinence from food and that enables a person to perceive God’s will more distinctly.” In other words, fasting gives the Christian a clarity of mind and peace to listen to His voice.

Coleman<sup>69</sup> notes: “Though the custom (of fasting) must not become an end in itself or be relied on as a means of earning divine favor, as it did with the Pharisees, properly followed, fasting permits one to have more time for prayer and reflection on the things of God.” Not salvation by any “thing,” but salvation that leads to spiritual disciplines. In a *Ministry*<sup>70</sup> article it is stated: “When we approach fasting as a way in which to deeply connect with the Creator of the universe, it brings with it great joy and spiritual renewal.” It can be a joyful, happy occasion. Ellen White<sup>71</sup> agrees with the statement as she suggests:

The true fasting which should be recommended to all is abstinence from every stimulating kind of food, and the proper use of wholesome, simple food, which God has provided in abundance. Men need to think less about what they shall eat and drink, of temporal food, and much more in regard to the food from heaven, that will give tone and vitality to the whole religious experience.

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<sup>68</sup>“Fasting”, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC), rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 8:363.

<sup>69</sup>Coleman, 94.

<sup>70</sup>S. Joseph Kidder and Kristy L. Hodson, “Gaining by Denying: The Benefit of Christian Fasting – Part 1 of 2,” *Ministry*, July 2016, 6.

<sup>71</sup>White, *Last Day Events* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 82.

What Ellen White mentions here is not total abstinence, but using healthful foods for clear thinking, and focusing the mind on spiritual needs and food, rather than on unhealthful sustenance.

To add to this note, Gear<sup>72</sup> has a word on fasting: “Fasting creates the opportunity to exercise more effective faith in the gospel. The gospel is the only place where the power of new life – the power to develop a love for God and others – resides. The power of the gospel is only released as we believe it. Fasting merely provides us a better opportunity to focus on the gospel and believe it.” Fasting opens the mind and focuses everything on the one thing – Jesus. In an article in *Ministry* magazine, Johnsson<sup>73</sup> states the following about fasting: “True fasting comes from the heart. It involves the secret place of communion with God; it is utterly devoid of outward show. It cannot be divorced from life, hoping that fasting will cover up for our quarreling and neglect of others.”

Fasting is a spiritual discipline like any other, but cannot substitute for lack of Christian behavior. Scoggins<sup>74</sup> also talks about fasting in this way: “Fasting is the discipline of the more mature disciple. When other, more tame disciplines are in place, then fasting becomes a necessary next step, and it will have far-reaching results for the spiritual life.” The words of Jesus also reflect that fasting is used for very difficult situations when he states that certain devils are only driven out by sincere prayer and fasting (Matt 17:21).

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<sup>72</sup>Gear, 201.

<sup>73</sup>William Johnsson, “The Fast that God Chooses,” *Ministry*, September 2012, 26.

<sup>74</sup>Jeff Scoggins, “Waking Up to Spiritual Discipline,” *Ministry*, July/August 2010, 54.

## **Worship**

Worship is “the attitude of humility, reverence, honor, devotion, and adoration that properly mark the relationship of created beings to their Creator, especially in His presence.”<sup>75</sup> Worship is something that should not only be done in church but can be done anywhere as the disciple speaks to the Creator. Smalley<sup>76</sup> suggests the following: “Worshipping God continually is our primary calling. Worship is something that should be consciously pouring out of me at all times.

When we worship God, our minds are lifted out of and above our circumstances.” Worship, then, is a way of placing the disciple in a mindset of being in the presence of the holy God with whom he or she has a relationship of love. Ogden<sup>77</sup> has this to contribute about worship as a spiritual discipline: “Authentic worship of God is a function of our affirmation that he is here and our understanding of who he is. The vitality and relevance of our worship are directly related to our view of God.”

This will enable the disciple to have a wonderful experience with his or her Maker as a God that is not a distant God, but one who is close by, actually in the disciple. Ellen White<sup>78</sup> is adamant that worship of God is not a sad exercise, but is something we do for a loving, tender Father. The worship of the Creator is something the disciple does from a heart of gratitude and love for God, not out of a sense of pressure. Hughes<sup>79</sup> states it this way: “Worship must be orchestrated and conducted

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<sup>75</sup>“Worship”, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC), rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 8:1184.

<sup>76</sup>Smalley, 95.

<sup>77</sup>Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 57.

<sup>78</sup>White, *A Call to Stand Apart* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 28.

<sup>79</sup>Hughes, 110.

with the vision before us of an august, awesome, holy, transcendent God who is to be pleased and, above all, glorified by our worship. Everything in our worship should flow from this understanding.” The idea that worship cannot be authentic if the disciple does not know and understand the holiness, the glory of God, is thought-provoking. This urges every Christian to make sure that they know exactly whom they worship and adore.

### **Family Worship**

Family worship is a Christian discipline that is neglected in the modern Christian home. Abraham set the example as he moved in his travels he called his family together regularly for family worship.<sup>80</sup> He was a faithful father who took the responsibility on himself of leading out in these seasons of worship. In the same way, the modern father should take that responsibility on himself to have regular family worship, even setting times for this activity.<sup>81</sup>

In a *Ministry*<sup>82</sup> article, the following is said about family worship:

Facilitate regular family worship, perhaps in the context of a family meal. This does not mean that disciples have to lead each time. Challenge children to create and lead worship. This will help them to develop their spirituality and share their own personal spiritual journey in a loving, supportive environment.

It is important that family worship bring families together and facilitates communication and family bonding. DuBose, says that the family needs to be nurtured in the pastoral family circle and that family worship must form part of the

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<sup>80</sup>White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1958), 128.

<sup>81</sup>White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 520.

<sup>82</sup>Duane McBride et al., “Family Bonding and Family Dinners,” *Ministry*, March 2013, 24.

daily schedule of the pastoral family.<sup>83</sup> As the Christian family grows closer to God, one spiritual discipline that can help with this is family worship.

## **Meditation**

The notion of meditating, not only on the Word of God but also on the whole idea of a loving, caring, personal God, can bring the Christian in close contact with his or her Redeemer. Finley<sup>84</sup> says the following:

The goal of Christian meditation comprises filling the mind with the Word and works of God. Meditating upon His greatness and matchless love, we are changed into His image (2 Cor 3:18). In Christian meditation, we look out of ourselves to Him. Jesus is the object of our thoughts, the supreme focus of our attention (Isa 45:22; Heb 12:1, 2). We recognize that the heart is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked and that in us there is no good thing (Jer 17:9; Isa 53:6; Rom 7:18). Our hope is in Him. Our mind is fixed upon Him. Our attention is focused upon Him, and when meditating upon Him, we are transformed into His likeness (Col 3:1, 2).

The idea then is to get closer to and more intimate with God; focusing on Him for a period of time – no time limits, no other significant projects or appointments, only God and the Christian. This then will lead to a transformed life in the Lord. Finley then makes a critical point when he cautions that Christian meditation is not to try and empty the mind, but actually to fill it with a better understanding and view of God.<sup>85</sup> The result is then to reflect the image of Christ in a better way.

To end this section on the spiritual disciplines, Finley tries to marry the word “Spiritual Formation” which has a negative connotation in some circles, with a Christian understanding. He makes this balanced statement<sup>86</sup>: “If we define spiritual

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<sup>83</sup> Rich DuBose, “Making Family a Priority,” *Ministry*, January 1996, 13.

<sup>84</sup> Mark A. Finley, “Biblical Spirituality: Rediscovering Our Biblical Roots or Embracing the East?” *Ministry*, August 2012, 6.

<sup>85</sup> Finley, 7.

<sup>86</sup> Finley, 7.

formation as being formed into the image of Christ as we meditate upon God’s Word, seek Him in prayer, and open our minds to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, certainly it is biblical.” This is in complete agreement with other authors on the same topic of disciplines for the sake of a closer walk with God.

### **Discipling and Mentoring**

If mentoring is looked at from a secular view, a simple definition would be<sup>87</sup>: “A mentor is someone who helps us learn the ways of the world, someone who has our best interests at heart.” Discipling and mentoring are two words that complement each other and belong together. There can be very little discipling without mentoring. The word discipling was explained in chapter one, but to make sure it is understood, it means helping someone to also become a disciple of God, in the same way, that the mentor is a disciple.

Grear<sup>88</sup> states the relationship as follows: “Another kind of relationship that influences ministerial moral formation is the candidate’s relationship with mentors and models. The mentoring relationship is the more formal of the two. It is an intentional, time-limited apprenticing to someone who embodies the kind of life to which we aspire.” It is a Christian of long experience taking someone who needs some training and experience under his wing. It is walking alongside an experienced person and learning to get closer to God. Krallmann<sup>89</sup> describes mentoring from a biblical point of view:

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<sup>87</sup>Floyd Wickman and Terri Sjodin, *Mentoring: The most Obvious yet Overlooked Key to Achieving more in Life than you Dreamed Possible* (Patel Nagar, New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill, 2005), 1.

<sup>88</sup>Grear, 78.

<sup>89</sup>Günther Krallmann, *Mentoring for Mission: A Handbook on Leadership Principles Exemplified by Jesus Christ* (Tyrone, GA: Authentic, 2002), 122.

A mentor in the Biblical sense establishes a close relationship with a protégé and on that basis through fellowship, modelling, advice, encouragement, correction, practical assistance and prayer support influences his understudy to gain a deeper comprehension of divine truth, lead a godlier life and render more effective service to God.

This can be a true blessing to young Christians wanting to get closer to God.

Also among pastors, this can be a tool in the hand of the church to teach young pastors to become real disciple-makers for the Lord. Biehl<sup>90</sup> even suggests that such a mentoring relationship with a protégé is a lifetime connection. This sounds contradictory to other authors who see it as a short-term bond, but in exceptional cases, the relationship could be a lasting one. The idea is getting closer to God, and if it takes a lifetime, then so be it.

Lee Camp<sup>91</sup> observes that a disciple is someone “who apprentice themselves to the teachings and life of Jesus above all other stories, myths, empires, traditions, doctrines, or beliefs.” The disciple of Jesus should be willing to help and guide others less experienced so that they can improve their relationship with Jesus. Drennan and Ma<sup>92</sup> make this statement about mentoring: “Effective mentoring can create a positive attachment relationship between two people that allows space for emerging adults to explore their identity and commitments in a safe environment and ultimately help them hear the voice of God.”

Adult learning could be a way of describing it, but in essence, it brings the mentee in contact with someone who can help the Christian grow and mature in their

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<sup>90</sup>Bobb Biehl, *Mentoring: How to Find a Mentor and how to Become One* (Lake Mary: FL, Aylen, 2005), 19.

<sup>91</sup>Lee C. Camp, *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World* (Grand Rapids: MI, Brazos Press, 2008), 213.

<sup>92</sup>Amy Drennan and Jermaine Ma, “Mentoring and Attachment: Insights to Ministry to Emerging Adults,” *Ministry*, September 2008, 16.

relationship with God. Jesus, of course, was the ultimate mentor, and as Krallmann<sup>93</sup> elaborates: “The unequalled genius of his (Jesus) mentoring approach was that by training good followers he raised outstanding leaders who, once ignited, enlightened and invigorated by the Holy Spirit, turned into excellent achievers for their Lord.” These mentees of Jesus, after Pentecost, started the Apostolic Church and from that small beginning, Christianity has moved around the world. Tom Grove gives three elements that Jesus left behind as a mentoring model. These are the choosing of the mentee, which included prayer, the association of the mentees with Jesus and then the delegation of ministry tasks to the disciples.<sup>94</sup> He suggests that this could be a good model to use in a mentor/mentee relationship.

A relationship that is of importance for this study is the senior pastor who is a mentor to the more junior or younger pastor. Interns placed in an intern program with senior pastors are common in many conferences. When Fischer says that there is need to take careful note of the mentor’s character and his or her qualifications, it means that it should perhaps be more structured.<sup>95</sup> This of, course, is important to determine if such a person will be a suitable mentor to other ministers. It would mean that mentor/mentee relationships must be compatible, or else it will not work well. If this “match,” spontaneous or forced, is a good one, Coleman<sup>96</sup> suggests, “These persons (Pastors and teachers) were in a unique position to equip the church for the work of ministry that they shared together (Eph 4:11-12). It was not their place to do all the labor themselves, but rather to train the people for the task committed by Christ to His

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<sup>93</sup>Krallmann, 128.

<sup>94</sup>Tom Grove, “Developing Spiritual Leaders like Jesus,” *Ministry*, December 2015, 14.

<sup>95</sup>Roland E. Fischer, “Mentoring Interns and Young Pastors,” *Ministry*, September 2014, 17.

<sup>96</sup>Coleman, 67 - 68.

whole body.” Therefore, it is important that this relationship be based on mutual understanding and character.

Many authors talk about disciple-making exercise when it can just as well be a mentoring effort. Greg Ogden, for instance, says that a model that can be used for making disciples is to invest about a year with two others, which will then multiply as the new disciples do the same in the next year, up to two years. It is a Bible-based curriculum, and it consists of half-hour sessions once a week.<sup>97</sup> Mentoring relationships of senior Christian people mentoring some junior or less experienced ones for growth and maturity. He goes further and calls these relationships an<sup>98</sup> “intimate, accountable relationship,” that should be developed to empower the mentee.

### **Summary**

As this section on discipleship, mentoring, spirituality and spiritual disciplines in literature is concluded, one or two remarks are in order. As the Christian disciple and disciple-maker grow closer to the Lord, there is need for something or someone to guide and lead in this process. This is where mentoring and spiritual disciplines find their place. Bridges<sup>99</sup> so aptly states, “As we grow in grace this way, we will grow in our motivation to obey God out of a sense of gratitude and reverence to Him.” Therefore, there is a link between all these concepts; it helps the Christian in his or her walk with God. It can be of great benefit for the pastor or Christian leader in the vineyard of Christ.

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<sup>97</sup>Ogden, 176.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid, 154.

<sup>99</sup>Bridges, 33.

As the two previous chapters introduced the discipleship ideas, these ideas will now find their practical implementation in the following chapters. The research will try to come up with answers to the problem of possible poor spirituality in Christian workers. The statement of the problem and possible solutions will now be tested and implemented in a practical way. Creating and implementing the research is the topic of the following chapters.

## CHAPTER 4

### STRATEGY FOR MEASURING THE SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF THE PASTORS OF THE NORTHERN CONFERENCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

In the previous chapters, the biblical basis for the study was determined from the Bible and the writings of Ellen G White. The summary of the findings shows that there is a firm basis for spirituality and discipleship in God's word. Chapter three did a search of all literature that has anything to add to the statement of the problem. A wide search was done, and many sources interrogated on this topic, and it further strengthened the basis for the quest for a possible solution. This chapter will attempt to set a design for conducting the research and the plan that will be followed to get data and to develop an intervention. This chapter will, therefore, proceed to create a research tool and get data so that an intervention plan can be set in motion to remedy the perceived problem.

#### **Ministry Context**

In chapter one, the ministry context has been dealt with. However, there is need to expand on that, as only a few salient points were touched on.

#### **Macro Context**

South Africa is a country of contrasts; semi-desert areas with extensive cattle and small stock farming, to tropical areas along the northern coastline, and everything in between. It has areas that are so flat, one can see for miles, and then there are mountainous regions dominated by luscious forests and plantations. It has a rich

heritage that is spread throughout the country for all to visit. South Africa is also known for its wildlife, and tourists have a wide variety of natural sanctuaries from which to choose. The economy was built up through the years to quite a stable system, although recent events have marred the good record of the past. South Africa, unfortunately, has a large population of unemployed, a figure currently standing at 26.7%<sup>1</sup> in July 2016. This is the highest it has ever been and is even growing, a worry to all the citizens.

Education is of high quality, and the youth are eager to learn and better themselves. Unfortunately, they go to all the effort to study, and their parents work hard to help them just to struggle to enter the workplace after their studies. The Universities keep a high standard, and some are recognized throughout the world as giving quality education. There are, however, problems due to feelings of frustration because of high fees, but overall, a good quality education is to be had.

The country has a broad range of cultures, which all contribute to an interesting mix of ethnic groups<sup>2</sup>. “South Africa has eleven official languages, and scores of unofficial ones. English is the most commonly spoken language in official and commercial public life – but only the fifth most spoken home language.” This, of course, gives rise to its own set of challenges when it comes to official documents. Politically, the country has a democracy dominated by one party, but the citizens are free to select their party of choice and vote them into power. The political situation is often volatile, especially when the time comes for elections.

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<sup>1</sup>Joanna Taborda, “South Africa Jobless Rate”, accessed 7 August 2016,

<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/unemployment-rate>.

<sup>2</sup>Mary Alexander, “South Africa’s Languages, accessed 7 August, 2016, <http://www.southafrica.info/about/people/language.htm#.V6bJRdJ951s>.

South Africa is a Christian country, with most of the Christians being Protestant, 36.6%, and non-Protestant Christians being 36%.<sup>3</sup> The Dutch Reformed Church was very prominent at the time of the previous Government and was the religion of the governing party. On the other hand, the situation currently is vastly different.<sup>4</sup>

By far the vast majority of South Africans belong to African Independent Churches, which combine traditional ancestor belief with Christianity. The Zion Christian Church is the largest of them. Over weekends, you may see groups of African Independent Church worshippers in green, blue or white robes, holding prayer meeting at riversides, or in open fields—their places of worship are natural.

The religious community has been rocked by many scandals among the clergy of the country, and therefore there is doubt about the overall spirituality of ministers of religion. There is still a reluctance and hesitancy to join a Christian denomination, especially if it is mainly White, as it was the dominant religious group that supported the government which was instrumental in supporting the “apartheid”<sup>5</sup> system.

It is also true that the Seventh-day Adventist church was silent on the unbiblical government system and that they were slow, after the advent of the new democratically elected government, to abolish arrangements that were instituted during the previous undemocratic establishment. Therefore, as a nation, and even as a church, there were suffering and feelings of distrust and alienation among members of the different races. Because of all this, the church and the congregations are still influenced by an outlook of exclusivity and even deep-seated racism. The Seventh-

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<sup>3</sup>The World Factbook, accessed 24 August, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/sf.html>.

<sup>4</sup>Allan Anderson, “African Pentecostalism and the Ancestors: Confrontation or Compromise,” accessed 13 July 2016, <http://country.southafrica.net/country/us/en/ravel-tips/entry/places-of-worship-enus?gclid=CKeEh5bbhM4CFQk8GwoddTYA5Q>.

<sup>5</sup>The term used for the system of government that discriminated against people based on their skin colour and ethnicity.

day Adventist church is well established in South Africa and has 121,938 members.<sup>6</sup> This, in a total population of 54,490,406,<sup>7</sup> gives an unfavorable ratio of over 400 citizens for every one Seventh-day Adventist. The work is progressing, but more should be done.

### **Micro Context**

The Northern Conference of South Africa (NCSA) comprises the northern parts of South Africa, including four of the nine provinces. It shares the same territory as the Trans-Orange Conference of South Africa. The NCSA has a membership of 19,487;<sup>8</sup> a mixture of White, Black indigenous, Black immigrant,<sup>9</sup> Colored, Indian and even Portuguese congregations. It has a steady growth with 56 pastors in the field and eight in the Conference office. The pastors also come from a wide selection of backgrounds, but mostly White. The two official languages used in the Conference are English and Afrikaans.

A concern for the Northern Conference is if their pastors are on a spiritual level where they can inspire and invigorate their congregants spiritually. It is a fact that pastors cannot always elevate their membership to a higher level than they themselves occupy.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the concern is to see that the pastors are spiritually sound and that they can feed their flocks. As the research was planned, it became

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<sup>6</sup>Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, SAUC, accessed 7 August 2016, [http://www.Adventiststatistics.org/viewSummary.asp?FieldID=U\\_SAUC](http://www.Adventiststatistics.org/viewSummary.asp?FieldID=U_SAUC).

<sup>7</sup>Worldometers, accessed 7 August 2016, <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/south-africa-population/>.

<sup>8</sup>Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, SAUC, accessed 7 August 2016, [http://www.adventiststatistics.org/viewSummary.asp?FieldID=U\\_SAUC](http://www.adventiststatistics.org/viewSummary.asp?FieldID=U_SAUC).

<sup>9</sup>A large group of immigrants from north of RSA border has made South Africa their home; Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and elsewhere.

<sup>10</sup>Ellen G. White, "An Appeal to the Ministers", *Review and Herald*, 8 August 1878, 49.

apparent that it 's hard to measure something like spirituality. However, to see how regularly pastors make use of the spiritual disciplines could give an indication of the level of spirituality. For this reason, the questionnaire was designed in this manner – to see where pastors are and if their level of spirituality can improve by interventions.

### **Cultural Context**

As already mentioned, the pastors of the Northern Conference are a culturally diverse group. Of the 56 district pastors, 31 are White; twelve are Colored, ten Black, of which only two are South African, and one local Indian pastor. There are also two pastors from elsewhere in the world, namely Egypt to help with the work amongst the Muslim groups and a Brazilian pastor that helps with the Portuguese work. As this traditionally White Conference has only recently (from about 1990) had Black membership, the process of getting culturally relevant pastors for the congregations has moved slowly. Nevertheless, every year this ratio is changing, as the conference tries to balance the cultural mix of its pastors.

A recent decision by the Administrative Committee<sup>11</sup> to recommend that at the session in October 2016, there should be at least one Black member (pastor) in the Administration<sup>12</sup> of the Conference. At an Executive Committee of the Conference<sup>13</sup>, this action was reworded to say: “Recommended that the Nominating Committee be sensitive to the current demographics of the NCSA.” This shows the intent of cultural inclusiveness. The group of district pastors has a very cordial and open relationship

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<sup>11</sup>Northern Conference of South Africa, “Minutes of the Northern Conference ADCOM,” (Johannesburg, South Africa: Northern Conference, 29 March 2016, 16-241).

<sup>12</sup>Administration made up of the President, Executive Secretary, Chief Financial Officer and Vice President.

<sup>13</sup>Northern Conference of South Africa, “Minutes of the Northern Conference EXCOM,” Johannesburg, South Africa: Northern Conference, 3 May 2016.

with each other, as well as with the Administrative pastors and directors. There is a relationship of trust and acceptance among them, and they work well together and play together when the occasion arises. Regular Workers Meetings are scheduled (two major a year) as well as a Team building exercise once a year. The Conference has also implemented quarterly one-day events for the pastors, where urgent matters or information sharing takes place. During 2016, the second Workers Meeting was replaced by a Family Retreat, where all the pastors and their families were taken to a resort for four days. The spiritual, physical and mental health of the pastors and their families are a priority for the Northern Conference.

## **Research Design**

### **Type of Research**

The kind of research that will be used for this project is in-ministry research done in the area of the NCSA. More specifically it will be descriptive quantitative research<sup>14</sup>, which is numerical descriptions of the criteria used. It measures frequency or averages. It measures things as they are. Quantitative research is research that is done to determine the relationship between one thing and another.<sup>15</sup> According to Roberts<sup>16</sup>, “quantitative research study generally adheres to a rigid standard found in research studies.” It has objectivity as an ideal and the format will be by use of a questionnaire. This type of the investigation was chosen, as it will be best suited to the situation.

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<sup>14</sup>The SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008, Accessed, 20 February 2017, <http://archives.gadoe.org/DMGetDocument.aspx/Types.of.Research.Methods.SERVE%20Center.pdf?p=6CC6799F8C1371F6C790A38569315032FE8B3FDBE6A7D64BC>.

<sup>15</sup>Earl R. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*. 12th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage, 2010), 23.

<sup>16</sup>Carol, M. Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2010), 21.

### **Rationale for Selection**

Research will be done amongst the pastors of the Conference, and an attempt will be made to involve the entire group. This was done to get as broad a sample as possible. The pastors are all available at times of meetings and organized functions of the conference.

### **Appropriateness of Study**

As the study is on pastoral spirituality and discipleship, the easiest and most workable model was to use the pastors in the conference where the study is conducted. They are the leading participants to try and find answers to the questions asked. The study had as a goal, to determine if certain interventions can enhance pastoral spirituality and, as the researcher is serving as ministerial secretary in the same conference, it was convenient to do the research there. The research was discussed with the President of the Conference at the time, and it was felt that it would be a good exercise for the Conference. The research was done anonymously, and no names were coupled to the questionnaires given to the ministers.

### **Population Sample of Participants**

There are currently 64 pastors in the Conference, and all of them received a questionnaire to be completed at a Workers Meeting starting on 16 February 2015. The questionnaire was translated into Afrikaans, as nearly 50% of the pastors speak it as their first language, and the Conference has Afrikaans as one of their official languages. At this Workers Meeting, the process of information and implementation of the research started. Every pastor filled out this questionnaire.

## **Criteria for Sampling**

The sampling method that was used was the simple random sampling method<sup>17</sup>. This method is used when the whole populations is available as was the case in the research done. All pastors were utilized in the study although not all the questionnaires were returned.

## **Instrumentation**

A questionnaire was used to get the necessary information from the group of pastors. After the biblical information and literature review had been done, it became apparent which questions would be appropriate for the study. In trying to come up with a questionnaire to measure spirituality, research was done to determine what factors influence spirituality; how it can be defined and how it can be improved. Spirituality is a very difficult concept to measure, but the only practical way is to look at the different spiritual disciplines that people engage in because of an encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ. The questionnaire was designed to ask questions that would determine how much time is spent on each of these disciplines. After different activities and interventions, the time spent on these disciplines was then be determined again by the same questionnaire (Appendix A).

In analyzing the various questions in the questionnaire, the following comments and remarks can be made. The aim of the questions was to determine not only how much time is spent on spiritual activities, but also those activities that enhance overall spirituality. The first six questions have to do directly with the pastor's spiritual life, trying to determine the amount of time per day they spend in prayer, in Bible study, Spirit of Prophecy reading and in meditation and fasting for

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<sup>17</sup>Jeanne Altmann, "Observational Study of Behavior: Sampling Methods," *Behavior* 49, (1974), 227.

spiritual reasons. These activities have been determined by theological and literature search to play a major role in spirituality. There are many Bible verses, as seen in chapter 2, which confirm this hypothesis. The verse that speaks about praying continually (1 Thess 5:17) is one example. The literature has also shown without a doubt that these acts lead to a higher level of spirituality, or are indicative of a spiritually growing person.

The next three questions (seven to nine) determined time spent in family and leisure activities. As the family of the pastor is of the greatest importance in his/her spiritual activities, he/she should not neglect them. In answering the questions about family time and vacation time taken, it can be determined if the minister is balanced in his/her lifestyle. As rest is an important part of any person's life, but more so in the busy life of the minister with several service points, rest and leisure are critical. Jesus in Mark 6:31 makes it clear that time for rest and leisure is of the utmost importance to keep the spiritual life vibrant.

Questions ten and eleven focused on the attitude towards the health message of the Seventh-day Adventist church. If the pastor is negative about this part of the message, their witness to the congregation will also suffer. Vegetarianism, although not a test of fellowship, is promoted by the church and is an indication as to whether the health message has been embraced or not. It has been a concern of the Conference that pastors do not adhere to this aspect of the Advent message, and therefore the question. Of course, as Ellen White<sup>18</sup> rightly points out, healthy eating habits have an influence on the physical and spiritual functioning of the person.

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<sup>18</sup>Ellen G. White, "These things ought not to be," Manuscript 24, 1902. Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office, Adventist University of Africa (EGWEBO-AUA), Nairobi, Kenya.

Question twelve aimed at the spiritual aspect of a pastor's life. It merely asked for an assessment of the spiritual health of the pastor at the time of filling out the questionnaire. The three categories (positive, neutral, and negative) give pastors the opportunity to evaluate for themselves where they stand in their journey with God. In truth, it can only be positive or negative, but neutral gives the idea of a temporary slump, but not total inactivity on the spiritual front. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul urges Christians to "examine yourself" to find if you are still strong in the Lord.

Daily exercise has become more of an issue in the world's fast-moving, super busy lifestyle. In asking this question (13), the researcher wants to determine whether pastors are looking after their physical health. The saying "a healthy body harbors a healthy mind," attributed to Juvenal, a Latin satirist, first written in Latin as *mens sana in corpore sano*, has been proven by science, to be true in our modern world.<sup>19</sup> Exercising on a daily basis helps the mind function clearly, and it will be beneficial for a pastor who has to make difficult decisions and help in crisis and council at short notice. Planned exercise will assist in overall balance in the spiritual life.

The next two questions (fourteen and fifteen) in the questionnaire focused on the pastor's personal witnessing outside of his/her direct pastoral duties in his/her congregations. It determined if pastors are also active in their immediate communities. The cleric can be so focused on the congregational activities that she/he does not get involved in ministry in the town, city or suburb where he/she stays. To be useful as a child of God, the life outside of the parish must also be consistent with that of Jesus, as He walked the streets of Jerusalem and further afield. He "mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to

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<sup>19</sup>Robert C. Elliott, "Satire," accessed 12 August 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/art/Juvenalian-satire>.

their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.”<sup>20</sup> Pastors should follow the example of their ultimate Mentor.

Questions sixteen and seventeen focused on the stewardship aspect of the minister’s life. The Bible spells out that humans are part of God’s creation and therefore belong to Him, they were bought by the blood of Jesus (1 Cor 6:19-20). Therefore, all they possess also belongs to Him, and He expects that the minister would return a faithful tithe and contribute to the coffers of the congregation where his or her membership is. Stewardship is, after all, part of the 28 fundamental beliefs of the Church they serve. Therefore, it is good to set an example to those that want to follow the minister.

The last question, eighteen, was an open question to determine whether pastors feel they are good disciples of their Master or not. This will most probably result in a wide variety of answers but will give some indication of the view pastors have of themselves as disciples of God.

## **Data Management**

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The questionnaire was drawn up with input from the advisor and the Conference President at the time. This questionnaire was handed out to the pastors at a Workers’ Meeting in February of 2015. The process and research were explained, and pastors were assured that it will be treated with the utmost care and that nowhere in the study will names ever be used. The information will be assessed for the group of pastors as a whole and not as individuals.

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<sup>20</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 143.

## **Presentation and Description of Findings**

After this information had been gathered, the planned interventions and training of the pastors started. At the end of eighteen months, at a Family Workers' Camp, in June of 2016, the same questionnaire was handed out, and the procedure explained. The information was then extrapolated and the data synthesized.

## **Analysis of Data**

The following table summarizes the first questionnaire's results, gathered in 2015. Not all pastors were present, but 46 forms were collected. Out of a possible 64, it gives 71.88% involvement. A summary of the results of the questionnaire answers is provided. (Table 1).

*Table 1. Questionnaire Results*

Question Number	Questions	Answers				
1	Time daily in Prayer	<1/4 hr (%) 9 (19.6)	1/4 - 1/2 hr (%) 14 (30.4)	1/2 - 1 hr (%) 14 (30.4)	1 hr – (%) 8 (17.4)	No Answer (%) 1 (2.2)
2	Time daily in Bible Study	< 1/4 hr 3 (6.5)	1/ - 1/2 hr 7 (13.2)	1/2 - 1 hr 18 (39.1)	1 hr - 16 (34.8)	No Answer 2 (4.4)
3	How often do you Fast	Once a Week 7 (15.2)	Once a Month 6 (13)	Once a Year 14 (30/4)	Never 17 (34)	No Answer 2 (4.4)
4	Time weekly in Lesson Study	Daily 8 (17.4)	Once a Week 28 (60.9)	> Once a week 6 (13)	Never 1 (2.2)	No Answer 3 (6.5)
5	Time daily in SOP Reading	< 1/4 hr 14 (30.4)	1/4 - 1/2 hr 14 (30.4)	1/2 - 1 hr 11 (23.9)	1 hr - 6 (13)	No Answer 1 (2.2)
6	How often do you Meditate	Often 31 (67.4)	Rare 14 (30.4)	Never 1 (2.2)		No Answer 0
7	Time daily for Family	0 hrs 0	1-2 hrs 24 (52.2)	3 – 6 hrs 16 (34.8)	> 6 hrs 2 (4.4)	No Answer 4 (8.7)
8	Percentage annual leave taken	< 25% 3 (6.5)	26-50% 4 (8.7)	51 - 75% 16 (34.8)	100% 22 (47.8)	No Answer 1 (2.2)
9	How often Leisure time	Weekly 17 (37)	Monthly 12 (26)	Rarely 17 (37)		No Answer 0
10	Feeling about Health Message	Positive 36 (78.2)	Neutral 8 (17.4)	Negative 1 (2.2)		No Answer 1 (2.2)
11	Are you a Vegetarian	Yes 21 (45.6)	No 24 (52.2)			No Answer 1 (2.2)
12	Describe Spiritual Walk	Positive 39 (84.8)	Neutral 3 (6.5)	Negative 4 (8.7)		No Answer 0
13	Daily time Physical Exercise	< 1/4 hr 10 (21.7)	1/4 - 1/2 hr 12 (26.2)	1/2 - 1 hr 14 (30.4)	1 hr - 9 (19.6)	No Answer 1 (2.2)
14	Daily time Witnessing	< 1/4 hr 12 (26.1)	1/4 - 1/2 hr 11 (23.9)	1/2 - 1 hr 9 (19.6)	1 hr - 9 (19.6)	No Answer 5 (10.9)
15	Daily time Relieving Suffering	< 1/4 hr 19 (41.3)	1/4 - 1/2 hr 11 (23.9)	1/2 - 1 hr 8 (17.4)	1 hr - 1 (2.2)	No Answer 7 (15.2)
16	Faithful Tither	Yes 45 (97.8)	No 0			No Answer 1 (2.2)
17	Offering as Percentage of Tithe	10% of Tithe 14 (30.4)	20% of Tithe 11 (23.9)	50% of Tithe 9 (19.6)	100% of Tithe 7 (15.2)	No Answer 5 (10.9)

In analyzing the answers as found in the questionnaires gathered, the following remarks can be made.

**Question 1.** The results give a fair distribution if given as a percentage of the total sample. There is no right or wrong, so in summary, 17.4% of the pastors spend more than an hour in daily prayer, and 19.6% of them spend less than a quarter of an hour in prayer. Both of these figures spell out the extremes as 60.8 % of the ministers fall in between. Of course, improvement is always possible.

**Question 2.** The result for daily Bible study was encouraging as 73.9% of pastors fall into the higher bracket (top two options), meaning they spend more than half an hour in daily Bible Study. Bible Study of less than 30 minutes makes up 21.7% (bottom two options). The question of how much time should be spent in Bible study is very difficult to determine, as persons differ in their habits, needs, and functioning.

**Question 3.** Fasting is not something that many pastors do, as the figure of 37% who never fast, shows. There can be many reasons for this, with medical reasons probably the most common. It is more likely this is something that has fallen by the wayside. Fasting is often considered an indicator of spirituality and in cases of serious issues, a valuable tool (Matt 17:21).

**Question 4.** Weekly lesson study is of great importance as a pastor can be asked to lead out in the study of the weekly lesson at any time. The 2.2% that indicated that they never study their lesson and the 6.5%, who did not answer, could show a lack of interest in this area. Perhaps a bigger issue is that 60.9% only study their lesson once a week, most probably Sabbath morning or Friday evening. A higher percentage of daily lesson study respondents would have been more acceptable.

**Question 5.** Reading of the Spirit of Prophecy (SOP) is essential for pastors, as they need to know and use the writings of Ellen White, but also to defend her as the prophet to the church. Seeing that it is spiritually uplifting material, it will also help the spiritual maturity of the clergy. It is alarming to find that 30% of pastors indicated that they spend less than 15 minutes in daily reading of SOP, although putting figures to this aspect is difficult, as pastors differ.

**Question 6.** Meditation on spiritual matters is also seen as a spiritual discipline, which can enhance spiritual growth. It is positive to see that more than 60% of pastors indicate meditating often. It could also be that 'rare,' was an indication of not doing it, but not willing to admit as such. It is also true that meditation is not a clearly defined term and could be confusing.

**Question 7.** Family time plays an important part in the minister's daily planning. Therefore, it is alarming to see that 8.7 % felt that rather than admit that they do not get to this, they would rather not fill it in. More than half of the pastoral team spends between one and two hours with their families, a sign of a healthy family life in general. An alarming item is the two pastors that indicated they spend eight hours a day with their families. This sounds excessive and shows an imbalance in overall life, with possible neglect of their parishioners.

**Question 8.** The high percentage of pastoral staff taking all of their annual leave (close to 50%) is also pleasing. This most probably means that family time at least happens during holidays. The pastors taking less than 50% of their annual leave should be investigated, as this could be an indication of overwork.

**Question 9.** The regular leisure time with family and friends revealed a stunning 37% of pastors who admit that they rarely take regular time for family or friends (in case of no family). This is a negative sign for pastoral family health, but

37% spending weekly time together is positive. Once a month is not sufficient, and the 26% should improve, although differences in habits and culture could play a role.

**Questions 10 & 11.** The answers given in response to the acceptance of the SDA health message was revealing. The 78% that feel positive about this is good, but less than 50% who embrace one part of it, vegetarianism, is negative. Over the years, there have been many members who make the health message a salvation issue, and this could be blamed for these negative feelings. With the appointment of a full-time health director early in 2015, this could start giving positive results in similar research.

**Question 12.** The team of pastors have to take the message of salvation to their districts and where 8.7 % indicate that they have a negative spiritual walk with God, is not a good sign. On the other hand, 84.8% reported a positive spiritual walk with God. One can only hope that this is a temporary slump and not something, that is the norm.

**Question 13.** The fact that 56.5% of pastors spend the recommended amount of time<sup>1</sup> on daily exercise is a good sign. If we take this as approximately 30 minutes daily, it paints a healthy picture. The 21.7% doing very little is slightly alarming. Several suggestions have recently been made to the Conference, which can improve the effective exercise regime of pastors, such as subsidizing gym fees, etc.

**Questions 14 & 15.** Witnessing outside of the congregational field is also a necessary activity to show community involvement. Although perhaps on the low side, it is commendable that many pastors are doing this in their personal capacity.

**Question 16.** The figure of 97.8% tithe return is positive, but this could be because there is an option at the NCSA that the Treasury Department can deduct tithe

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel Ganu, Lecture on Exercise, Adventist University of Africa, Kenya, 14 August 2016.

from their monthly salary. There is no indication of the percentage of pastors who make use of this service, but it would be interesting to know. If the pastor would take this responsibility on him/herself instead of having the Conference deducting it, it would be a better indication of good stewardship.

**Question 17.** A person who is a faithful tithe returner does not automatically make him/her a faithful contributor to the budget of the congregation, but overall the pastors seem to be quite faithful. No comment can be ventured on the percentage that is adequate, but 10.9% not answering, could be an indication of not wanting to divulge sensitive information.

**Question 18.** This question was added to get a feel of how the pastors see themselves and has no right or wrong or standard answer. Out of 46 respondents, only 37 responded to this particular question. A few said yes, in other words, they see themselves as true disciples but did not elaborate. Most of the ministers, in answering this question, spoke about the fact that they are trying to be disciples, but that they fall short and are still growing. A few responded to this question in an arrogant way unless one sees a plain 'yes' as a sign of pride. A few saw their calling as an honor to work for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. A few of these answers are negative, showing that they are not a good disciple, but praying for God to help them grow. Some pastors indicate growth since they gave their lives to him. One that struck me says, "I try my best to be a follower and not just a fan." Interesting answers from pastors who are struggling to keep their spirituality at a healthy level, but believing that Jesus is faithful.

Now, something about mentoring and mentorship in the NCSA. The Conference has a well-established and workable internship program that is all about mentoring. A young pastor coming into the ministry after his/her studies is placed

with a senior pastor as mentor for one year. After that year, the intern spends another year with a different senior pastor as mentor, after which he/she is placed in his or her own district. In 2015 and 2016, the SAUC arranged for short training sessions early in the year for both the mentors and the mentees. On the first day the groups were together, the next two days they were apart. The mentees each got a list of 50 practical duties which must be experienced during the two years of internship and signed off by the two mentors. This ensures that the young pastor will become well versed in the practical aspects of ministry. More mentoring should be done through an ongoing program until the young pastor becomes an experienced, well-rounded and competent pastor.

### **Intervention Design**

In planning the interventions for the pastors, to try to enhance their spiritual walk with God, the researcher used the normal interaction with the pastoral staff. This meant that the two regular Workers' Meetings per year was set aside for this purpose. The Conference also hosts an Annual Bible Conference, which was planned and successfully executed by the researcher over the previous three years. This annual event was also used to help the pastors in their spiritual journey.

Other activities such as stewardship lectures and events, visits by the ministerial secretary couple, and inspirational material sent to the pastoral couples, were elaborated on to provide spiritual encouragement. In assisting with the planning and monitoring these interventions, a Logframe Matrix was used. This is described as follows<sup>2</sup>: "Logical Framework", or 'log frame,' describes both a general approach to project or program planning, monitoring and evaluation, and – in the form of a 'log

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<sup>2</sup>Josiah Levine, "Logframe," accessed 15 August 2016, <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/logframe>.

frame matrix’ – a discrete planning and monitoring tool for projects and programs.”

This log frame is a tool that was chosen to design, execute and assess a project. This gives an idea of how best the program can be used to ensure the implementation and determine the change that is needed. A log frame was drawn up to assist in the interventions to be utilized for this research. (Table 2).

*Table 2. Logframe*

Objective	Verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Important assumptions
Goal To improve the spirituality of the pastors of the Northern Conference	Draw up a questionnaire that is filled out at the start of the research during February 2015	The researcher draws up and supplies the questionnaire to the pastors	Pastors of the Northern Conference willing to participate
Purpose Implement a strategy to spiritually strengthen the pastors of the Northern Conference in their walk with God	Interventions are implemented and after approximately 18 months, June 2016 the questionnaire is filled out again	Questionnaires explained, filled out and collected again by the researcher	Pastors willing to fill in the questionnaire and apply the suggested disciplines into their lives
Outputs Over a period of approximately 18 months, to measure different disciplines and try to improve the participation by 5%.	Compare the results of the answers on the questionnaire and calculate the difference	Keep track of all the interventions and gather the second same questionnaires	Interventions are successful, and pastors are touched
Activities Interventions to help the pastors realize their situation and work on their spiritual walk with God through lectures and information at: Workers meetings Bible Conferences Family Retreats Stewardship Seminars Personal visits & interest shown	The questionnaires are properly extrapolated, and the data of the two questionnaires are calculated and the difference determined	Gather the two sets of questionnaires and calculate results to find if there was an increase or not	The attendance is good at the interventions, and the pastors fill in the questionnaires honestly and truthfully

To expand on the log frame, the horizontal headings will be explained in short<sup>3</sup>. “A generic log frame matrix is typically one formed around a 4 x 4 table. At minimum, four central categories, arranged horizontally by column, or vertically by rows, contain information on the project/programmes *Goal, Purpose, Activities,* and *Output.*”

### **Goal**

This is the broader goal that the project would like to achieve. In the matrix, it is stated as the improvement of the spirituality of the pastors of the Northern Conference of South Africa. It gives the ultimate goal of this study.

### **Purpose**

This will result in the project’s central outcome. The following quotes all come from the same source, Levine. It is a “localized result that the intervention seeks to achieve in support of the goal.” As the matrix indicates, for this study, the strategy will be used to realize the goal set. The strategy will be implemented, and the results looked at.

### **Outputs**

Here list “those observable, measurable change, and tangible products/services to be delivered by the intervention, which serve to achieve the above goal and purpose.” This then needs to spell out what will change and who will benefit from it. In the above study, the output over a period of eighteen months is to improve the participation in certain spiritual disciplines by 5%.

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<sup>3</sup>Levine.

### **Activities**

“The main tasks that need to be completed in order for the output to be achieved are defined.” In the case of this particular study project, it is the interventions that will be attempted to reach the definite goal of a higher participation of pastors in certain spiritual disciplines and activities. These are lectures, information, and meetings organized to help the pastoral staff reach the goal. The column headings also need to be clarified.

### **Verifiable Indicators**

These indicators will be measured to determine if the “events taking place have been achieved.” In the particular case of the study is the drawing up of a questionnaire to hand out to the pastors at a pre-determined time before the interventions started in February 2015; the implementing of the different interventions; completion of a similar questionnaire, and the comparison of data.

### **Means of Verification**

This aspect is “the location of those sources of data required of the above indicators.” In the case of this study, it is the questionnaire, its explanation to the pastors, keeping abreast of all the interventions and eventually calculating the differences on the two sets of questionnaires.

### **Critical Assumptions**

In this column, it finds the possible “external factors which the evaluators believe may positively or negatively influence the events described by the narrative summary, including any external phenomena beyond the project/program manager’s control.” Again, in the research project at hand, it is things like the willingness,

openness, and honesty of the ministers in completing the prescribed questionnaires. The big question is if the pastors will cooperate in this.

In looking at all the data in this log frame, it helps to prioritize, to diarize and to make sure everything is in place for the different interventions to not only take place but that it be effectively administered for the best results. The researcher is in the process of planning some interventions for this project. The usual Workers' Meetings that happen twice a year will be the main venue where suitable speakers will be sourced who can impress upon the minds of pastoral staff certain ideas and activities for their benefit and spiritual growth. The aim is to impact upon the habits, the relationships, and the activities to help the pastors to serve God in a more fulfilling way. These Workers' Meetings usually happen in January/February and again in June/July of every year. This will ensure four of these meetings where interventions can be planned over a two-year period.

In planning the interventions, the following was envisaged:

**January/February 2015** - A speaker who can help with spirituality; what it is, how to develop it and the problematic areas of spirituality. This will be held at a Conference facility, and a communion service will be included.

**June/July 2015** – Someone who will focus on the specific duties of the minister, the policies that regulate and assist in the smooth execution of these duties, and especially, the ethical behavior that is expected of a pastor. It will be held at a venue away from the Conference to create an informal atmosphere for interaction, sporting activities, and relaxation.

**January/February 2016** – This meeting will be arranged away from the Conference premises in a more relaxed and tranquil environment. It will focus on the mental health of the pastor in his/her work setting. Pastors should be better informed

as the issues of mental fatigue, burnout and depression are becoming more prevalent in our society and amongst the clergy. Also to help them identify these conditions in others. A communion service will be associated with this four-day meeting to ensure a spiritual atmosphere.

**June/July 2016** – It was decided that the pastoral families needed to get some time away together and therefore a Holiday Resort setting would be chosen. It will also enhance relaxation in a natural environment, and the minimum of structured activities will be planned. Different speakers will be selected for the morning and evening worships, also someone to accommodate the various age groups of the Pastors kids. A special program for the ministerial spouses will also be planned. It would be a challenging and costly exercise, as it would have to cater for a group of close to 200 people.

A few years ago, the Conference initiated an Annual Bible Conference to be held during a suitable time of the year with a specific theme. This event is now going to be used to strengthen the pastors in their theological competence.

The Bible Conference planned for August 2015 was going to focus on “The Godhead” (Trinity). There were conflicting views on the Holy Spirit, Jesus being born and therefore not part of the Godhead, or not being God. A few of the pastors who are theologically inclined will be the presenters, assisted by a lecturer from Helderberg College. The facility to be used will be the auditorium of the Sedaven campground, a Conference facility.

The second Bible Conference planned for May 2016 would be looking at the topic of “Salvation by Faith” and a pastor from the Biblical Research Institute at the GC will be asked to be the presenter. It will also be hosted at the Sedaven facility for purposes of recording the event for later distribution to pastors and laypersons. The

pastors will have a special one-day session with the guest speaker to help them understand the topic, which is often misunderstood by the clergy.

As there is an annual Team Building exercise for the ministerial staff, it was decided that this would also contribute to pastoral improvement. This will be held in a rustic environment with very few modern facilities and amenities. It will be to assist in fostering a sense of team spirit. Every minister works alone in his district, makes his own decisions on daily routine, on what topic to preach on and how to implement ideas in the congregations. They forget that they are part of a ministerial team, as well as the support team at the Conference. They need to get to know one another and learn to work together.

Therefore, the aim of this exercise is to help them work together, with worship talks by members of the team, leisure activities organized by a team, preparing meals together and spending their social interaction together. Very little structured activities are planned. In planning the interventions, it was also decided to spend some time in studying the health message of the church. In cooperation with the Health Director of the Conference, pastors staying close to the Conference office will be taken to a vegan restaurant to experience a plant-based menu. A demonstration on healthful cooking will be arranged for the pastoral spouses. The acceptance of our unique health message and its benefits will be emphasized. More such efforts are needed to convince our pastoral staff of their responsibility in this regard.

Stewardship is a part of the message of the church, and of the minister. To make them more aware of the importance of their commitment to stewardship, more workshops and one-day seminars for pastoral staff will be held. This important concept cannot be proclaimed faithfully if it is not part of a person's lifestyle.

Another important aspect of this research program was to ensure that the pastoral families get to know the ministerial association team at the Conference. Therefore, a visitation program will be embarked on to visit all pastors in their homes. Pastoral children are sometimes only known by names and not by faces; this barrier can be broken down by home visitations. Praying for couples throughout the year, sending birthday wishes to the pastor, the spouse, and the children would also enhance this process. Remembering anniversaries by sending a message will help to build lasting relationships.

Information, lectures, and interventions will help the Pastors of the Northern Conference in their spiritual growth; to have a more balanced lifestyle and to take more responsibility for the health and spirituality of their families and their members. The changes that will take place after these interventions will only be detectable as the questionnaires are summarized and analyzed. Successful planning and execution of these interventions should help to bring about an improvement in the spirituality of the pastors as well as their ability to serve God, their families, and their congregations.

### **Limitations**

During the research, some limitations were found. The first and foremost was the difficulty of determining spirituality of people. It is a difficult concept to grasp and harder to measure spirituality. Another limitation was that the researcher did not want to tell the ministers what he was trying to determine in fear of not getting objective answers. This was overcome by revealing to them limited information about the study.

## **Summary**

In conclusion, the interventions are being planned, and the prayer is that God will intercede for a successful outcome. In the next chapter, the two sets of data collected will be compared, evaluated and summarized. The previous Conference President, Dr. Dave Spencer, has a saying that people do not change. I do not agree, as the working of Holy Spirit can never be underestimated in a person's life. It is, however, true that people do not change without the mediation of the Holy Spirit, but with constant involvement and much prayer, the hoped for improvement in spirituality can be achieved.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTED INTERVENTIONS

After the theological determination of the study, the literature review and the choosing of the tools to do the research, it is time to implement the research. After the research discussed in the previous chapter, was implemented, it will be reviewed in this chapter, and the results of the interventions and its implications will be looked at. This chapter sets out to give an intensive discussion and evaluation of the research done. It will determine the success of the interventions, or if the expected outcome was not established, what the possible reasons could be.

#### **Chronological Implementation of Interventions**

In planning possible interventions, a decision was made to use existing events which the pastors of the Conference attend, to implement the interventions.

#### **Workers Meetings**

There were four Workers Meetings scheduled from the start of the interventions through to the last session where the second questionnaire will be completed. As the planning for the interventions took shape, the first one, from 16 to 19 February 2015, took place at the Training Centre at the Sedaven campgrounds of the Northern Conference. The theme of these meetings was '*Changing and Becoming a Change Agent.*' The researcher invited a professor from Andrews University to speak specifically on Spirituality, and the effect it has on the pastor in his ministry. The topics that the speaker discussed in his four four-hour sessions were the following: *Christ's Call to Discipleship, Keys to Highly Effective Discipleship,*

*Counting the Cost of Discipleship*, and *The Reward of Discipleship*. The reaction to the information was positive. We had already arranged to have recordings done, and every attending pastor received a CD. There was a communion service with supper thereafter, which ended the meetings on a high note. The speaker stayed over on the same premises and had time to interact informally with the ministers. This proved to be a highlight for most of the pastors in the 2015 calendar.

The second Workers Meeting of 2015 was held at a location near Rustenburg, in the North-West Province of South Africa, from 28 September to 1 October 2015. The NCSA has an unwritten policy to have one Workers Meeting at a Conference facility and one away from it. The speaker for this event was the Ministerial Secretary of the Southern Africa Union Conference (SAUC) with the theme '*Ministerial Ethics*.' All relevant topics surrounding ethical behavior in the ministry were discussed. The speaker stayed at the venue and interacted on a social level with the pastoral group after and between lectures. The title of his talks was *Workers in His Vineyard*, and vital information about policies and the conduct of ministers was discussed. This was slightly more informal than the first meeting, but all the staff appreciated it. The presenter mentioned a policy that not one of our officers knew about, and it was immediately voted and implemented soon after these meetings. The pastors now have one breakaway weekend per year paid for by the Conference.

The third Workers Meeting was held from 25 to 28 January 2016, but because of water problems and a resultant moratorium on any events at the Sedaven Conference Center, an alternative venue had to be found. A Game Lodge near Rustenburg in the North-West Province, owned and managed by a Seventh-day Adventist family, was located. The speaker was the head of pastoral counseling at Vista Psychiatric Clinic in Pretoria, South Africa. The speaker spoke directly, but

very compassionately about mental health and the relevant problems that pastors could experience or encounter. Because of these lectures, one of the participants realized that he was suffering from depression. After these meetings, he saw a doctor who diagnosed his depression. He is on treatment and is now testifying about his experience. A few months later, another pastor shared that he was admitted to a facility and treated for depression and burnout. Again, the informal contact with the speaker in a beautiful environment and game setting was very beneficial for the pastors. The speaker, who is also a qualified pastor, conducted an agape<sup>1</sup> communion service one evening. It was well received and appreciated by all.

The last Workers Meetings for this period of the interventions was held from 16-19 June 2016. We had decided to make it a special retreat for ministerial families. The venue was a Holiday Resort with hot water springs in the Limpopo Province. The families were housed in bungalows and meals were taken together at a restaurant on the premises. Speakers were brought in for morning and evening worship. They were the SAUC President and the President of the Kwazulu-Natal Freestate Conference (KNFC). The theme for this weekend retreat was *Christ's Family*. Special programs for the pastors' kids (PK's) were arranged, and two women came for the weekend especially to conduct these.

The pastoral spouses also had a special session and were addressed by the Director of AWM Department of the NCSA. The SAUC ministerial secretary and his wife were also invited, and he addressed the group on two occasions. The focus was mainly on family time together, so very few lectures were scheduled. There were leisure activities organized for everyone; going for a game walk and climbing the

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<sup>1</sup>A communion service where a supper of different kinds of bread, juices and fruit are served.

nearby mountain, but overall much time was spent relaxing in the warm water of the pools.

### **Bible Conferences**

Since 2014, an annual Bible Conference had been organized where either a guest speaker or local pastors discuss a specific topic. In 2015, it was decided to look at the Godhead (Trinity), as the issue of the Holy Spirit as part of the Godhead was becoming a concern amongst some members in the NCSA. The Conference was hosted at the Sedaven campgrounds on Sabbath and Sunday, 15 and 16 August 2015. Some of our local pastors presented lectures on this topic, with a lecturer from Helderberg College, Somerset West, who spoke on Sunday. The meetings were well attended, although we found that the members who have this conflicting view are so set in their ways that they did not attend or were prone to arguments. For the pastoral team's own theological development and assurance, it was a positive event.

The topic for the 2016 Bible Conference was on Salvation by Faith, and a member of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) of the General Conference (GC) was invited to be the main speaker. It was held at the Sedaven campgrounds on 28 May 2016, with a special meeting for the pastors and workers only, on Monday 30 May 2016. The event was well attended on the Sabbath, and the summary he presented of his material on the Monday for the pastors was well attended. The pastors, especially, appreciated the theological, but very practical information from the main speaker. It was academically stimulating and well accepted. The topics for the Bible Conferences for the two years coming would be Hermeneutics (2017), and The Bible and Ellen White (2018).

### **Other Events Used as Interventions**

The NCSA organizes an annual Pastoral Team Building event, where the aim is to get the district pastors, together with the Administrators and Directors, together to create team spirit and a sense of belonging. In 2015, this event took place at a Holiday Resort called *Die Oog*, close to Naboomspruit in the Limpopo Province. These events are optional, and not all ministers attend them, but the turnout for 2015 was good. About 50 workers attended this event. No guest speakers were brought in, but the Administrators and Directors were scheduled to take the morning and evening devotionals. There was a daily early morning walk through the attached game park, but other than that, it was leisure and building relationships between the ministers. A few outings were arranged, such as a visit to a crocodile farm, and a picnic lunch at a nearby farm.

The Stewardship Director of the Conference organizes different sessions from time to time, and pastors are encouraged to attend. On 11 March 2015 the Stewardship Director of the SAUC, presented a lecture. The attendance was good with about 30 pastors attending. The exposure of the pastors to these events is viewed in a positive light, as they should be good stewards themselves before they can teach good stewardship.

The recently appointed Health Director, and the Ministerial Secretary of the Conference, (the researcher), arranged a visit to a Vegan Restaurant on 27 May 2015. The restaurant, Leafy Greens, is situated between Pretoria and Johannesburg in a rural setting where meals are prepared from fresh vegetables and herbs from their own garden. This was done to introduce the pastors to a plant-based menu, as not all of them follow a vegetarian lifestyle. It was a memorable day for the ± 30 pastors who attended from the Conference area. Unfortunately, not all workers could attend, as

some of them are in far-off rural areas. The pastors were impressed, but the general feeling was that the spouses should also be exposed to this type of cooking.

At our second Workers meeting of 2015 at the Rustenburg venue, it was decided to ask the Conference Health Director, to serve vegan meals. The meals were very appetizing and enjoyable. Comments on the menu were positive. Some of the workers were quite surprised that plant-based vegan cooking could be so good. Again, the observation was made that the spouses should also be introduced to this way of cooking.

Because of the feedback, the Health Director and the ministerial spouses' coordinator for the Conference, planned a healthy cooking class for the pastoral spouses. On Sunday, 27 April 2016, eighteen pastoral spouses got together at the Panorama church in the western suburbs of Johannesburg. Different dishes were prepared, and interesting information was shared with the spouses. Under the guidance of the chefs, the spouses prepared different breakfast and lunch dishes, and all had a good time. The President of the Conference at the time accompanied his wife to the cooking class and was favorably impressed. Unfortunately, only the spouses who stay close by could attend this valuable meeting.

Some other items that could encourage the pastoral families and that could strengthen their spiritual walk need to be mentioned. The Ministerial Secretary and his wife, who is also the ministerial spouses' coordinator embarked on a visitation program of all the pastors and the pastoral office staff. By the time the researcher had to leave for Kenya for his last session of study, about half of the pastors had been visited in their homes. This was done in an effort to build a better relationship with the pastors and their families so that items of concern and difficult issues could be addressed as soon as possible. Feedback has been positive, and the families and

especially the pastoral children (PK's) appreciated the visits and small gifts. The ministerial couple also sends a congratulatory e-mail or text message to the pastors, their wives and children on their birthdays and wedding anniversaries. This also has led to a united pastoral team and a positive attitude towards the Conference, God's work and their duties.

Perhaps one last item that can be mentioned is that the Ministerial Secretary sends out regular snippets of useful material gained at the Workers meetings, lectures, and seminars to the pastors. This is an attempt to keep the values and truths of spirituality fresh and vibrant in the minds of the workers and to encourage them to keep their relationship with God on a positive level.

### **Limitations of the Interventions**

In planning and executing these interventions, there were always limitations to the process. Some pastors do not feel the need to attend, even though most of the meetings are compulsory. Therefore, information does not always reach all of the workers and incorporation is therefore poor.

The interventions were done without the participants knowing that it was there to try to improve their spiritual walk with God. Although these are all pastors and therefore seen as God's chosen men and women, they are also human and sinful, as are all of the human race. Information retention and acting upon it is not always very positive.

One serious challenge is that ministerial spouses cannot always attend all these events. Many of them have their own occupations, some do homeschooling, and others have small children who need their mothers at home. The Conference also does not have sufficient funds to cater for the spouses at all these events.

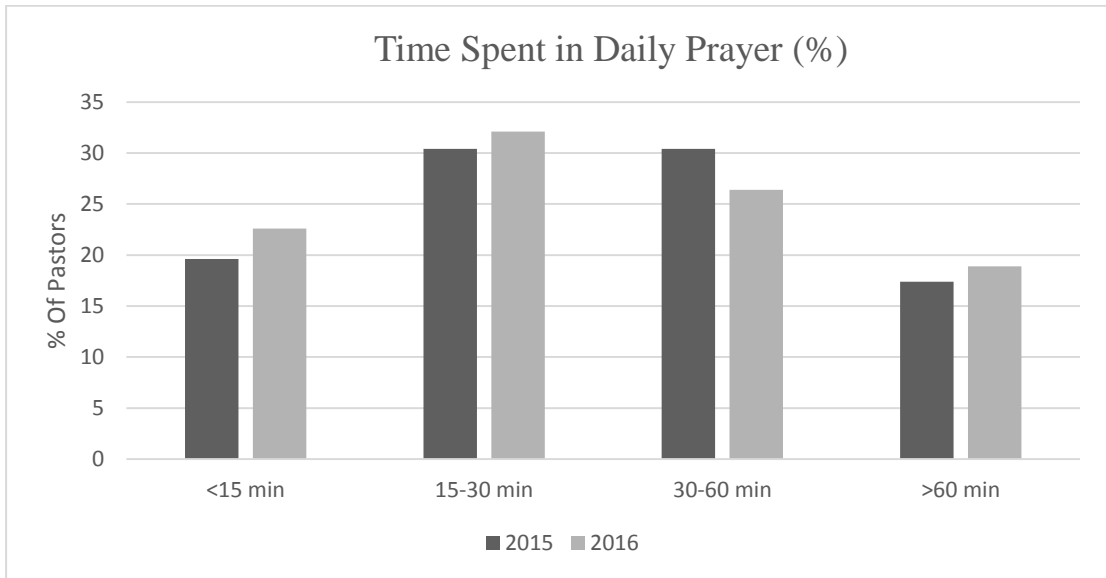
## **Final Evaluation of Results**

In the final analysis of results, the two sets of data from the two sets of questionnaires were compared. These results were then plotted on a graph, question by question, to show the direction and size of the movement. A summary of the total comparison of all questions follows as Table 3. As this was not very easy to read and to see the movement, graphs were then drawn of each question and will be used as each question is discussed.

Table 3. A Comparison Between the 2015 and 2016 Percentages

Q nr	Question		2015%	2016%		2015%	2016%		2015%	2016%		2015%	2016%
1	Time daily in Prayer	< ¼ hr	19.6	22.6	¼- ½ hr	30.4	32.1	½ - 1 hr	30.4	26.4	1 hr +	17.4	18.9
2	Time daily in Bible Study	< ¼ hr	6.5	9.5	¼ - ½ hr	15.2	22.6	½ - 1 hr	39.1	43.4	1 hr +	34.8	22.6
3	How often do you fast	Once a week	15.2	17	Once a month	13	13.2	Once a Year	30.4	30.2	Never	37	39.6
4	Time in Lesson Study	Daily	17.4	18.9	Once a week	60.9	54.7	> Once a week	13	17	Not at all	2.2	7.5
5	Time daily in SOP Reading	< ¼ hr	30.4	28.3	¼ - ½ hr	30.4	32.1	½ - 1 hr	24	24.5	1 hr +	13	15.1
6	How often do you Meditate	Often	67.4	60.4	Rare	30.4	37.7	Never	2.2	1.9			
7	Time daily for Family	None	9	1.9	1-2 hrs	52.2	56.6	3-6 hrs	34.9	34	> 6 hrs	4.4	1.9
8	% of annual leave taken	< 25%	6.5	20.8	26-50%	8.7	11.3	51.75%	34.8	26.4	76-100%	47.8	39.6
9	How often Leisure time	Weekly	37	32.1	Monthly	26	20.8	Rarely	37	47.1			
10	Health Message	Positive	78.2	81.1	Neutral	17.4	17	Negative	2.2	0			
11	Are you a Vegetarian	Yes	45.6	49	No	52.2	51						
12	Describe Spiritual Walk	Positive	84.8	64.1	Neutral	6.5	26.4	Negative	8.7	9.5			
13	Daily time Physical Exercise	< ¼ hr	21.7	32.1	¼ - ½ hr	26.1	39.6	½ - 1 hr	30.4	26.4	1 hr +	19.6	1.9
14	Daily time Witnessing	< ¼ hr	26.1	32.1	¼ - ½ hr	23.9	32.1	½ - 1 hr	19.6	22.6	1 hr +	19.6	13.2
15	Daily time Relieving Suffering	< ¼ hr	41.2	50.9	¼ - ½ hr	24	28.3	½ - 1 hr	17.4	11.3	1 hr +	2.2	9.5
16	Faithful Tither	Yes	97.8	100	No	0	0						
17	Offering as % of Tithe	10% of T	30.4	34	20% of T	24	35.8	50% of T	19.6	11.3	100% of T	15.2	17

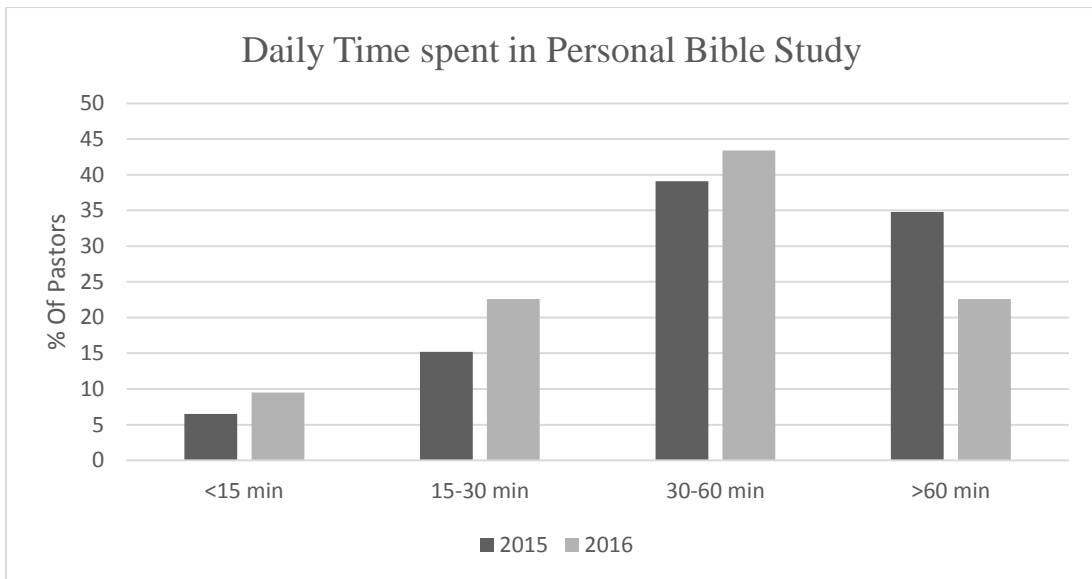
**Question 1: Time spent in daily prayer.** This question determined the time pastors spend in prayer regularly. It gives an indication of the spiritual walk with God.



*Figure 1.* Time spent in Daily Prayer (%)

In looking at the results of the daily prayer comparison, there seems to be very little change between the time of the first and second questionnaire. The below fifteen-minute group rose from 19.6 to 22.6%. The next group from 30.4 to 32.1 and the next group lowered from 30.4 to 26.4. The over 60-minute group rose slightly from 17.4 to 18.9. However, one needs to note that changes in habits formed over many years do not happen easily. It can only change with emphasis placed on it at every available opportunity. It is also true that these types of spiritual changes can only be done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with much prayer from all concerned.

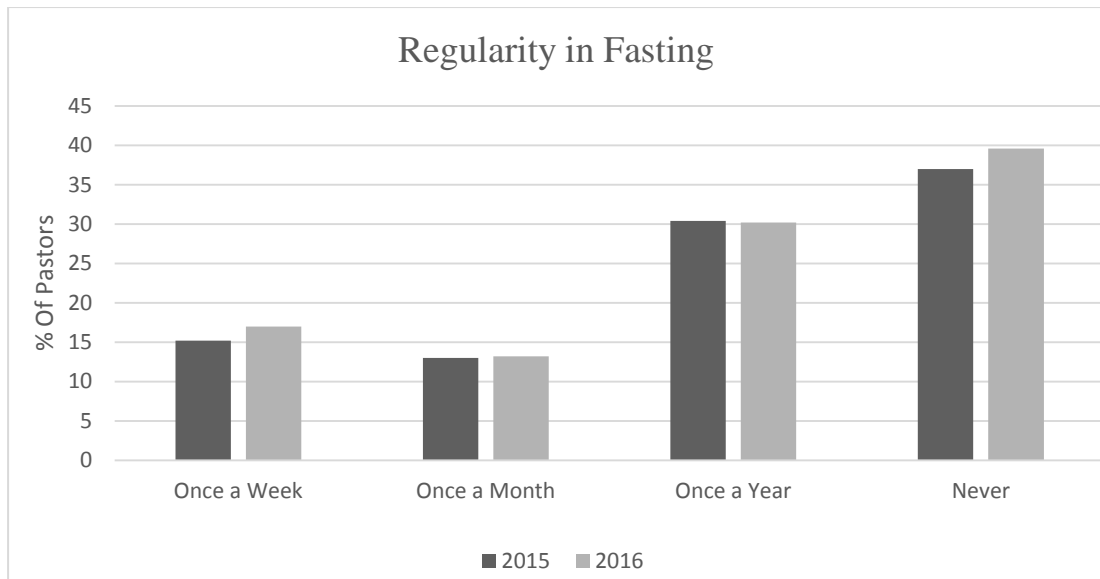
**Question 2: Daily time spent in personal bible study** Here the time spent in reading, studying and contemplating the Word of God was determined. A good indicator of a relationship between God and disciple.



*Figure 2. Daily Time Spent in Personal Bible Study*

As the time spent in daily Bible study is compared, there are positive signs in the middle area where respondents in the under 15 minute, 15-30 minute and 30-60 minute areas increased slightly-percentages indicated in the table. The over 60-minute area decreased substantially, from 34.8 to 22.6%. Most of the respondents fall in the 30-60-minute area. As there is no ideal prescribed, increase in the higher areas is positive. It is also true that the disciple cannot spend all day reading the Bible, but Bible knowledge is of the utmost importance for a pastor of the church. Again, change comes over time and with much prayer and wrestling with God for help.

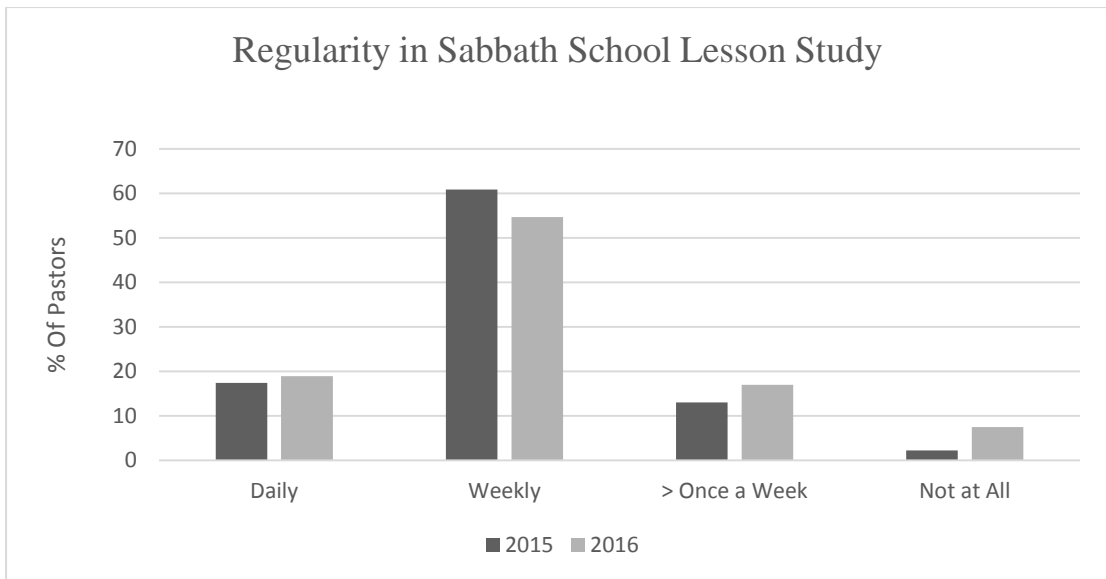
**Question 3: Regularity of fasting** Fasting as spiritual discipline indicates the need for prime spiritual time for greater issues. This can be indicative of spiritual maturity.



*Figure 3. Regularity in Fasting*

The results show that fasting is not something that is often done by the pastors of the Northern Conference. Close to 40 % of the pastors never fast as part of their spiritual walk with God. The percentages stayed basically the same, with a slight change from 15.2 to 17% in the once a week group. As was shown by the literature study in chapter three, fasting is one of the spiritual disciplines that can have a positive influence on discipleship. Reasons for not engaging in the discipline of fasting can be numerous, but what is needed, is to make pastors aware of the positive side of fasting. Fasting, of course, does not need to be absolute abstinence, but can be many faceted. Education on the benefits and dangers of fasting should be put on an agenda of Workers Meetings for the future.

**Questionn 4: Regularity in sabbath school lesson study.** As the lesson study is designed for combined congregational study time, ministers should study it regularly. This will help if they are asked unexpectedly to present. Regularity is an indicator of spiritual maturity.

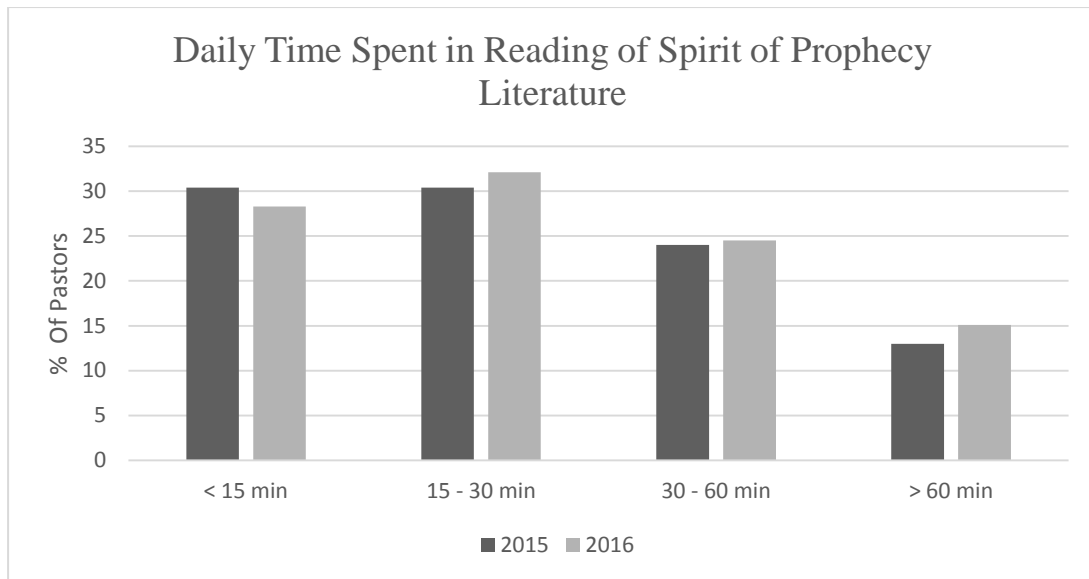


*Figure 4.* Regularity in Sabbath School Lesson Study

For a pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church not to study the Sabbath School lesson could be seen as very negative. It is unfortunate that some pastors indicated that they do not do it. The other concern is that a significant portion of pastors (60.9 and 54.7) only study their lessons once a week, which most probably means on a Friday evening. Less than 20% of pastors in the NC take part in daily Sabbath School Lesson preparation. As many of the congregations in the NC are situated in the rural areas and are small churches, the pastor can be asked at any time to take the lesson study. It is a worry that these lessons are then poorly prepared.

**Question 5 Daily time spent in reading od spirit of prophecy literature.**

God led His church through the writings of Ellen G White. Reading these writings to understand better the Bible and the role of the church is of importance and indicates mature faith.



*Figure 5. Daily Time Spent in Reading of Spirit of Prophecy Literature*

It is very difficult to decide what the optimum amount of time should be that a pastor should spend in this activity, but it is very clear that each pastor has set his/her time for this activity and there is only slight change over the two years. It is encouraging to see that most spend some time in this activity. There could be activities that will lead to more time spent on Spirit of Prophecy (SOP). This can be done by inviting the Ellen White Estate to present seminars on this topic or for the local Ellen White Director at the Conference to have awareness campaigns. However, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor should know the value and importance of reading the writings of Ellen White.

**Question 6: Regularity in spiritual meditation** Spiritual meditation in the true biblical sense is thinking about spiritual matters pertaining to faith and activities. It indicates using our brain to dissect biblical topics that leads to spiritual growth seriously.

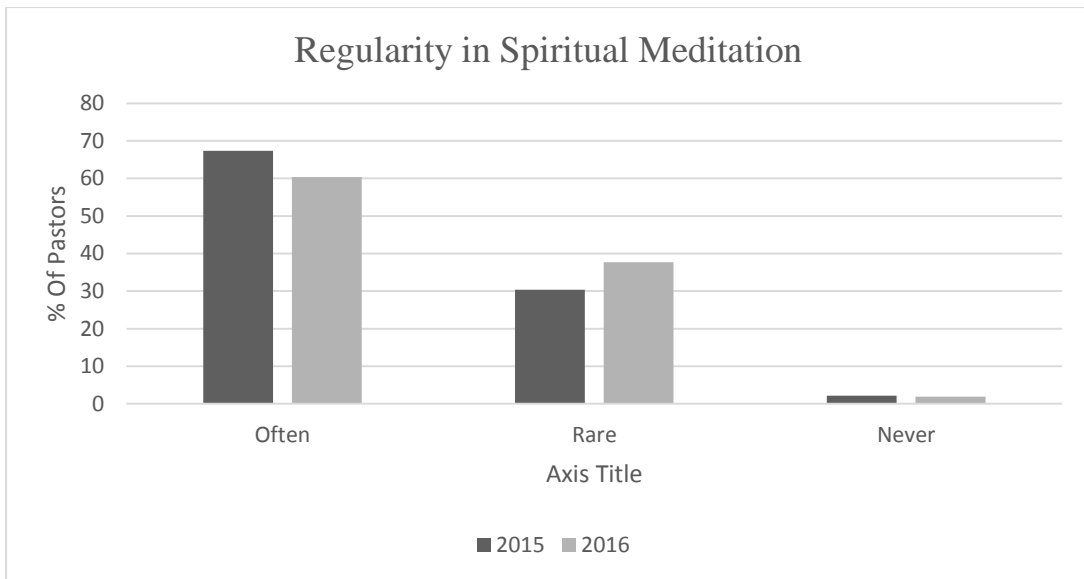
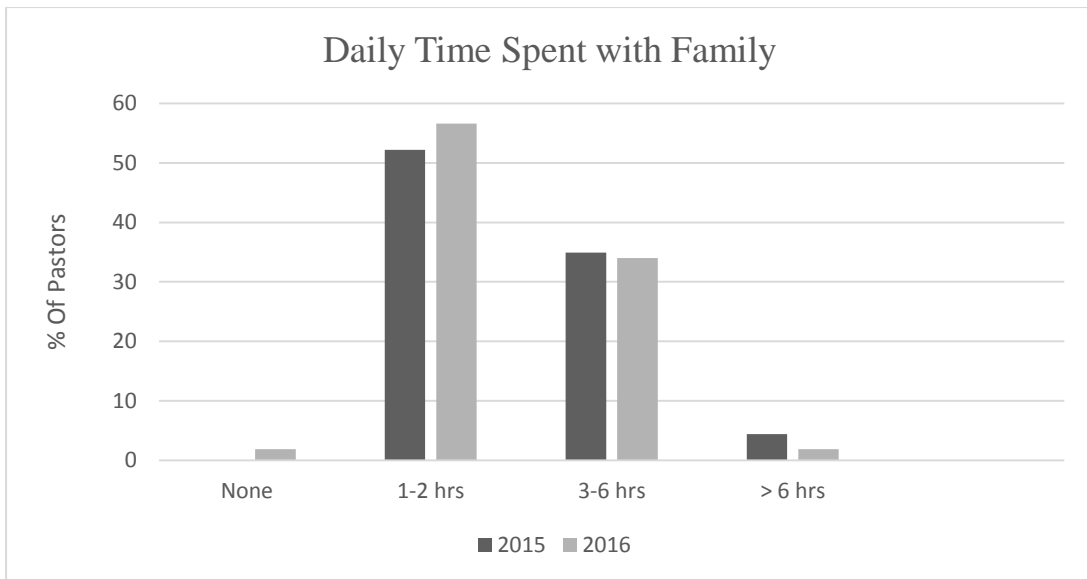


Figure 6. Regularity in Spiritual Meditation

This concept of spiritual meditation is a controversial one in Christian circles, but it must be made clear that what is referred to in this section is thinking prayerfully about one’s spiritual condition. It is a positive sign that more than 60 % of the pastors of the NC regularly spend time thinking and meditating about their spiritual walk with the Lord. As the spiritual journey is a growth activity, it needs to improve constantly. To think about it is to be concerned about it and that helps the minister to grow continuously in this area

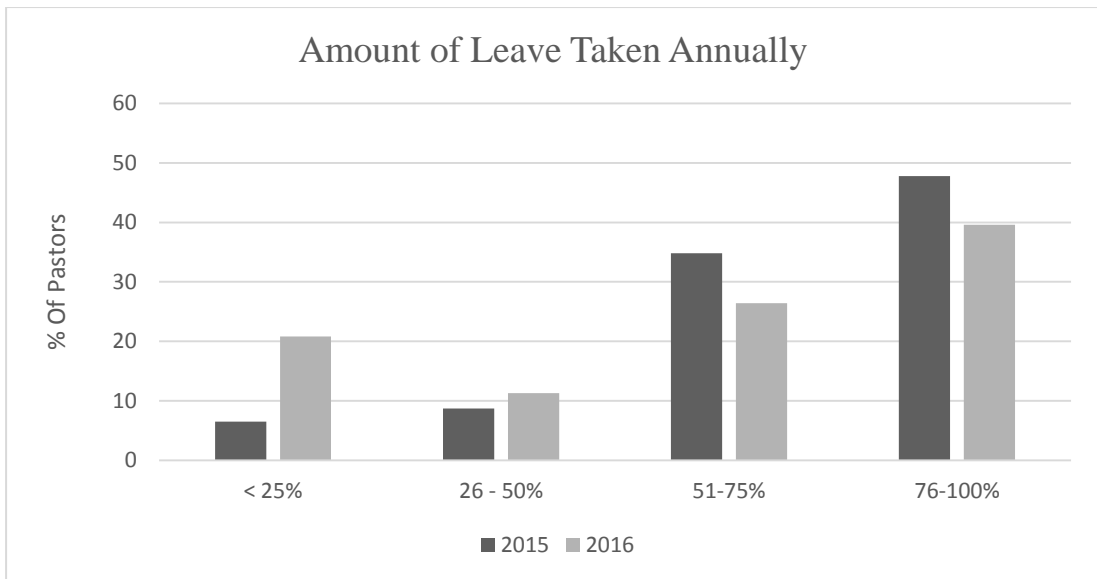
**Question 7: Daily time spent with family.** To be spiritually balanced time needs to be spent with family in a spiritual, but also an informal setting. This ensures bonding to each other which ensures an authentic priest in the home.



*Figure 7. Daily Time Spent with Family*

It is important that the pastor spend time with close family, but it should be done in a balanced way. There is too much, there is too little, and this will vary with marital status, the size of the family, and the age of the children. This again is a difficult item to evaluate. It is positive to see that most of the pastors of the NCSA spend between one and six hours on a daily basis interacting with their families, and the increase from 52.2 to 56.6% in the middle group is encouraging. Members sometimes demand more time than the minister can give, but, as said, it is a balancing act. However, it is paramount that the pastor can present his/her family to God at the second coming.

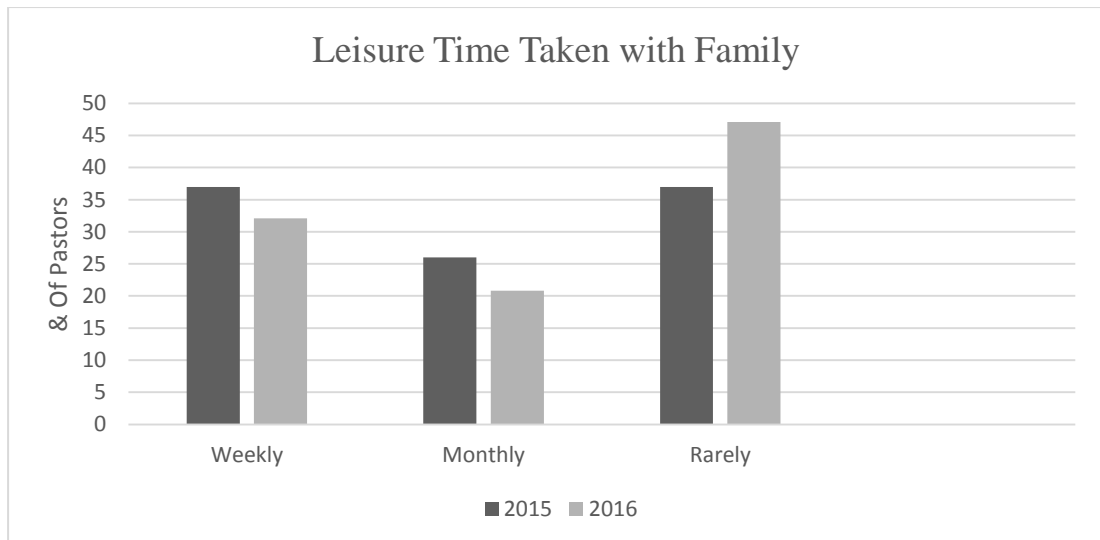
**Question 8: Amount of leave taken annually.** Taking leave is linked to leisure time with family, but also indicates balance in spirituality. The disciple must also be able just to get away from work and study.



*Figure 8. Amount of Leave Taken Annually*

To look at the percentage of leave taken annually is to assess if the pastor is also able to spend time away from his/her work. Although this is a calling from God, there is a need to take time off, because Jesus said to His disciples, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (Mark 6:31, NASB). It does indicate someone who has a balanced life, by taking leisure time as well. It is positive to see that the largest percentage of pastors do take more than half of their annual leave. The increase of the pastors taking less than 25% of their leave (from 6.5 to 20.8) is discouraging, however. This figure should be 100% of pastors making use of the vacation away from their daily work.

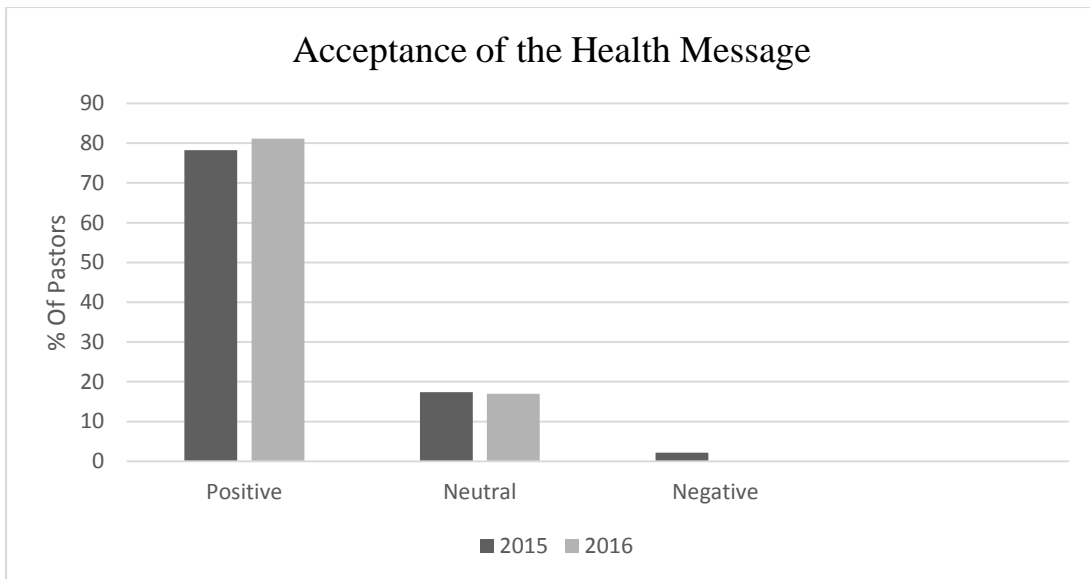
**Question 9: Leisure Time Taken with Family?** To just be a father and husband to the family indicates balance. All humans need leisure time to recharge the batteries for efficiency.



*Figure 9. Leisure Time Taken with Family*

This question is very closely linked to the previous one, but it measures the leisure time that is taken on a regular basis, rather than leave for a limited period. The idea here is for the pastor to take time out of the busy weekly schedule to spend with his/her family members, be it parents, spouse, and children or a special person in the life. It is very disturbing to note the large percentage of pastors indicating that they rarely take time out for family ( an increase from 37 to 47.1%), even less than once a week. It seems that the pastors are very busy and engrossed in the work of God, but God also gave them families to support and evangelize. Leisure time should be where families bond and form lasting, loving relationships and memories. It can never be positive to lose a child or spouse because of work, even if it is work done for the furtherance of the cause of God.

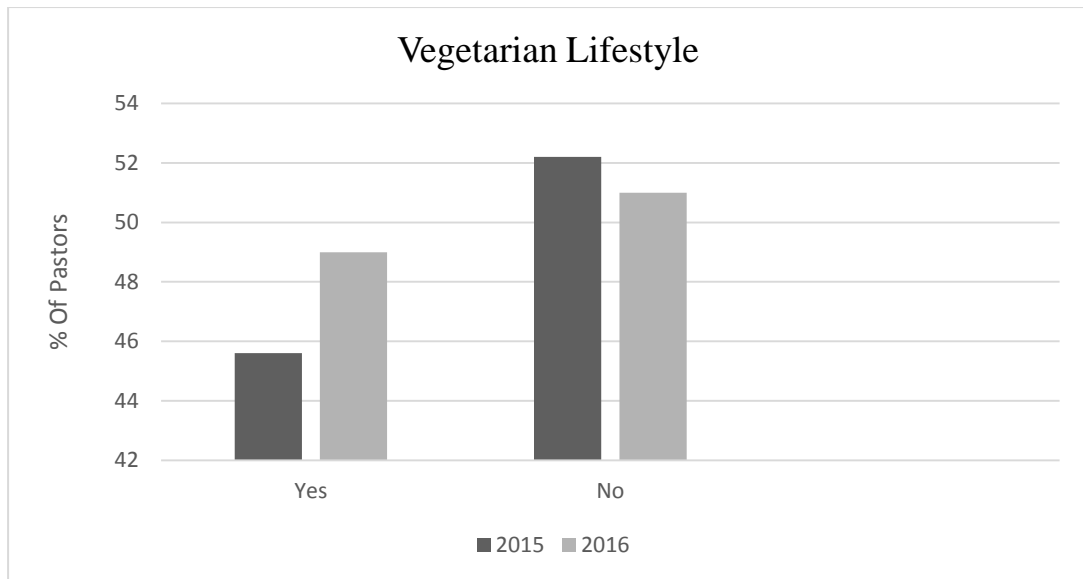
**Question 10: Acceptance of the health message.** The health message of the church has been developed and is believed to enhance holistic living. The pastor needs to live and teach this message to indicate spiritual maturity.



*Figure 10.* Acceptance of the Health Message

By accepting the health message as proclaimed by the SDA church, one can never claim that one will be saved. On the other hand, the Bible makes it clear that God is also interested in our health (3 John 2). Therefore, it is very heartening to see that about 80% of pastors (increase from 7.2 to 81.1%) of the NC accept the health message of the church. One can only hope that they follow this lifestyle and teach their congregations the core principles of the health message. It is of some concern that over 10% of pastors indicate a neutral stand towards this important part of the gospel. One would need to investigate the cause of this situation and provide training and encouragement.

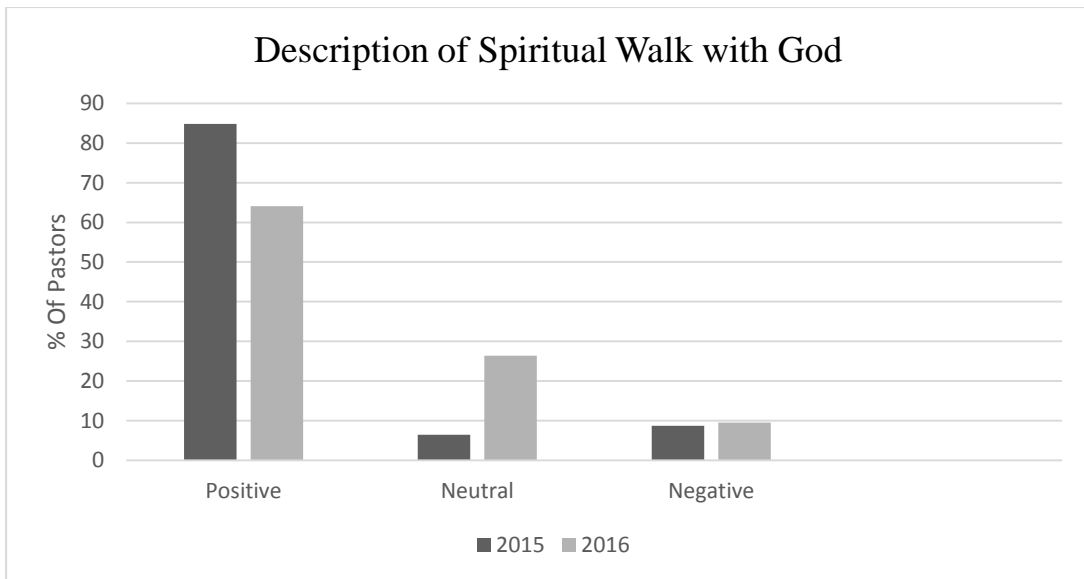
**Question 11: Vegetarian lifestyle.** Vegetarianism is not a test of faith in the church, but the minister needs to show his/her commitment to the beliefs of the church. Therefore, it can demonstrate a will to adhere to the spiritual cause of God



*Figure 11. Vegetarian Lifestyle*

This question and the previous one are very similar, but in this question, the diet the pastor follows for health is determined. Here it seems as if there is a discrepancy between the 80% that accept the health message, and only about 50% living a vegetarian lifestyle. The increase from 45.6 to 49% saying they do follow this diet was encouraging. Through the years, there has been the perception that the health message, and especially a vegetarian diet, is a way to earn salvation. This could be the reason why so many pastors are rebelling against a message of salvation by diet, or vegetarianism. However, it is still a worry to see an inconsistency existing between the health message and a vegetarian diet. Balanced presentations are needed, that clearly show the pros of a healthy diet and the positive outcome it can have on overall spirituality.

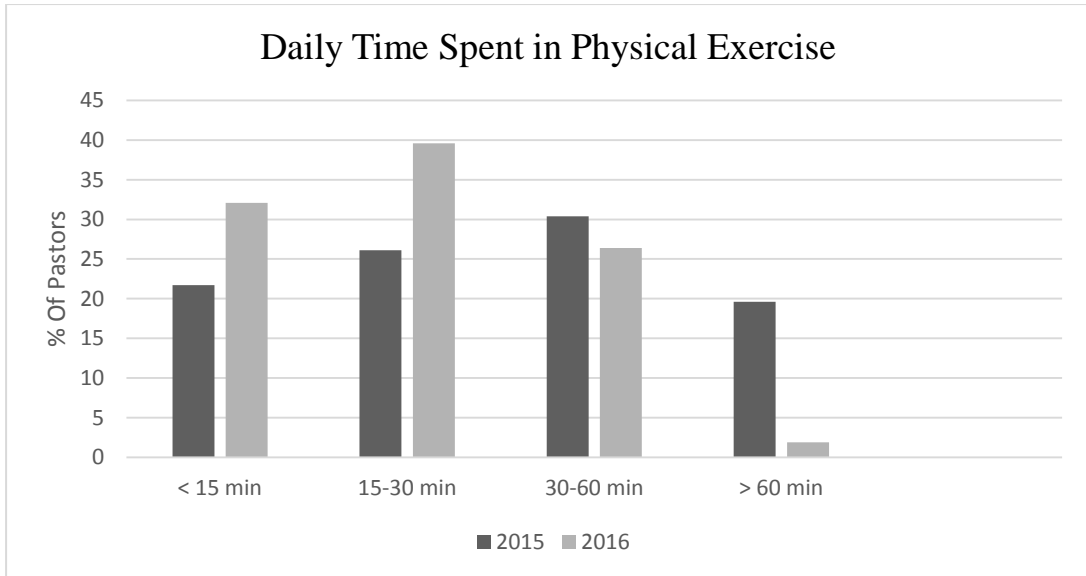
**Question 12: Description of spiritual walk with God.** Determining if the pastor has a grasp of his own spiritual situation and the attitude to it. Can he/she clearly see the spiritual way they are on?



*Figure 12.* Description of Spiritual Walk with God

As pastors, there should always be a positive relationship between him/her and God. However, the pastors are human, sinful human beings and they go through difficult spiritual times. It is comforting to see that a significant percentage of pastors feel positive about their spiritual walk, although the decrease from 84.8 to 64.1% is alarming, the increased percentage indicating a neutral position in 2016, is somewhat worrying (from 6.5 to 26.4%). It could be that they are negative, but so as not to disclose it, they indicate neutral.

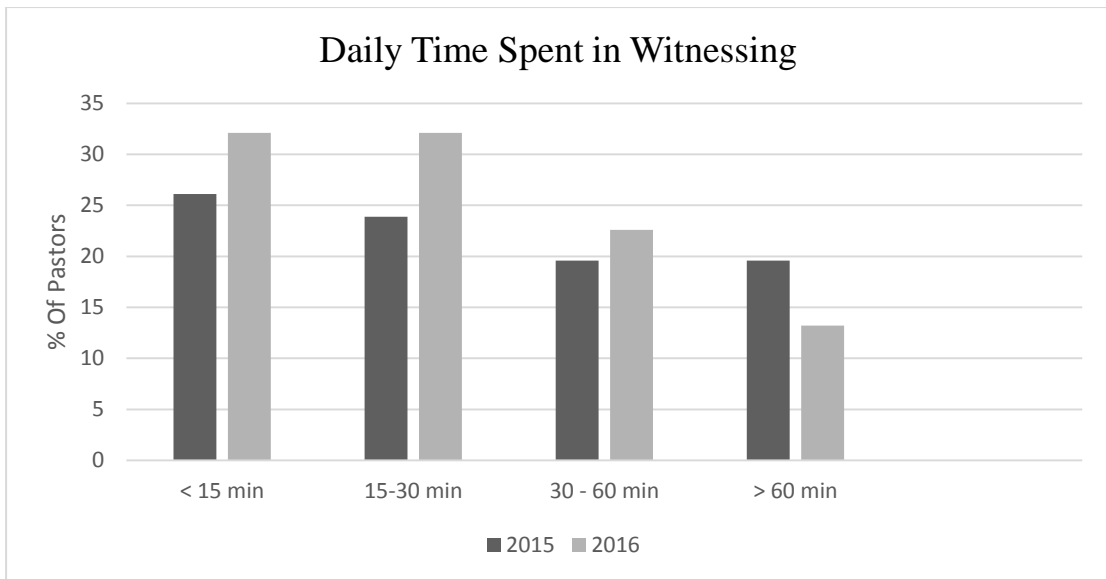
**Question 13: Daily time spent in physical exercise.** Physical exercise enhances spirituality as it helps clear the mind and helps concentration on spiritual matters. A spiritual person is balanced in lifestyle.



*Figure 13.* Daily Time Spent in Physical Exercise

Regular exercise is of the utmost importance to help in the overall health of a pastor, or any professional person. The indication is that most of the pastors are spending at least some time in physical exercise. The large percentage spending less than 15 minutes in physical exercise is perhaps a negative, but on the other hand, very close to 40 % are exercising for about 30 minutes a day. The decrease in pastors exercising more than an hour per day (30.4 to 26.4%) could be an indication of a more balanced approach to physical exercise, but this cannot be stated for sure.

**Question 14: Daily time spent in witnessing.** Witnessing about the message that is dear to the disciple indicates spiritual maturity. The Holy Spirit guides this activity.



*Figure 14.* Daily Time Spent in Witnessing

The idea of this question is to determine if the pastors are also witnessing outside of their pastoral duties. Of course, many of the pastoral duties are related to witnessing, but this is meant for the area in which they live. This seems to be a balanced picture, with more than 60% of pastors spending up to 30 minutes a day in witnessing. The increase from 23.9 to 32.1% in the group that spend between fifteen minutes and 30 minutes exercising is encouraging. This does seem to indicate a physically healthy ministerial group.

**Question 15: Daily time spent relieving suffering.** To relieve suffering is a biblical injunction and is a sign of a true disciple. A relationship with God leads to a relationship with the needy, the hopeless and the have-nots.

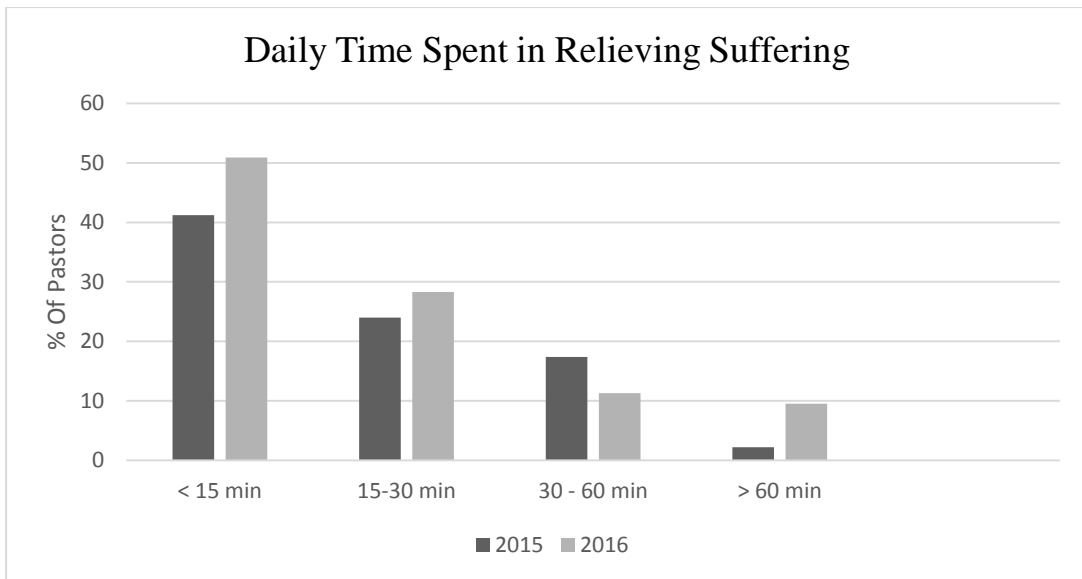


Figure 15. Daily Time Spent in Relieving Suffering

It is commendable to find workers who find the time in the very busy schedule of a pastor's life, to be active in the relief of suffering. Although the time spent on this is not very high, there is at least some time allocated to this activity. Perhaps a point of concern is that half of the pastors are spending less than 15 minutes on this. The increase from 2.2 to 9.5% that spend more than an hour in this activity was positive.

**Question 16: Faithfully returning God's tithes.** Tithing is an indicator of stewardship, which shows a spiritual walk with God. The gospel also touches the finances of the disciple and shows commitment to God.

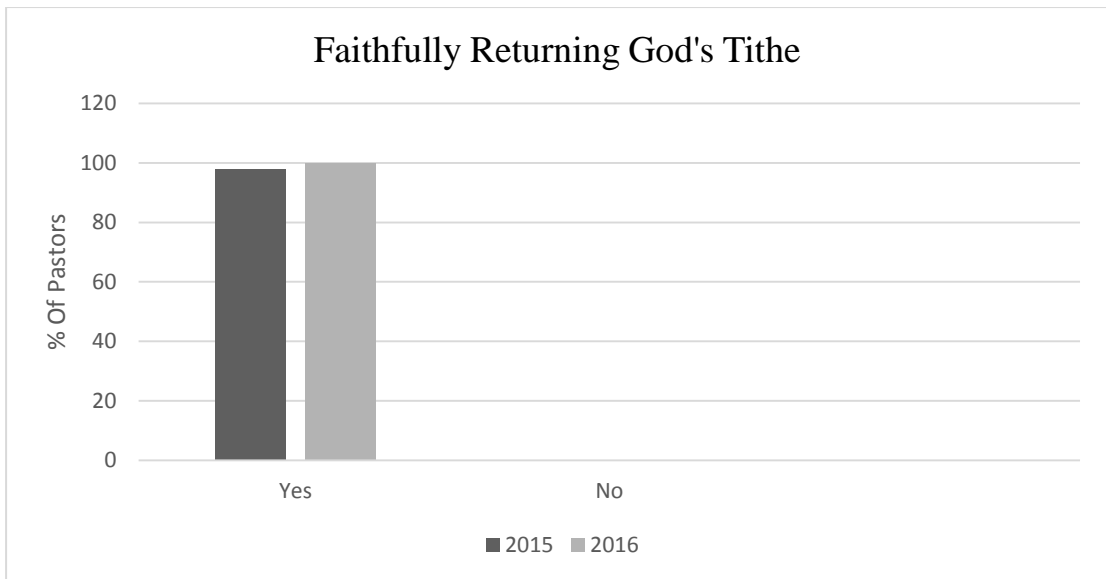
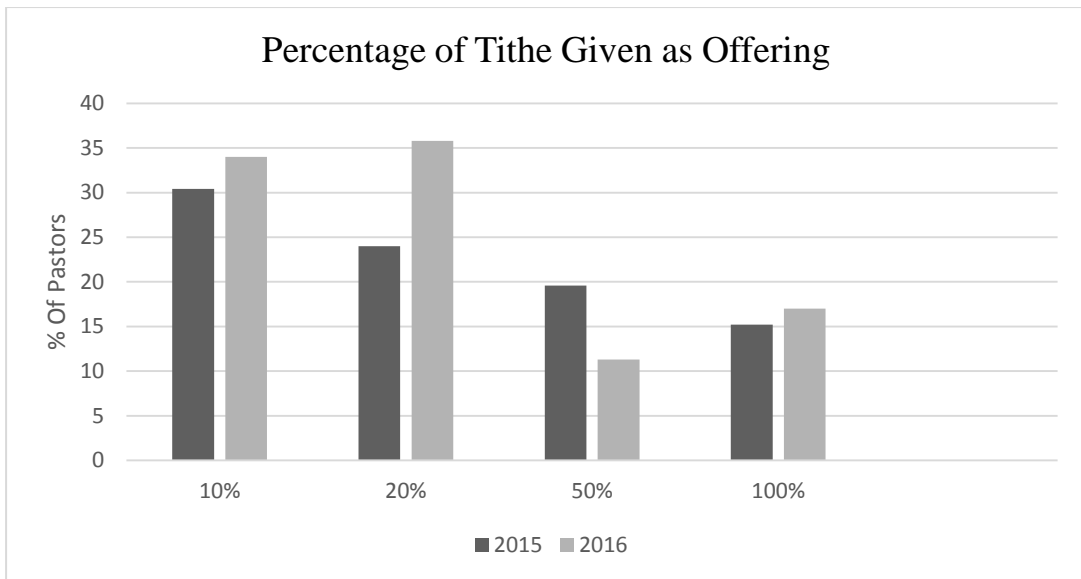


Figure 16. Faithfully Returning God's Tithe

To return a faithful tithe is necessary for any pastor who is committed to his/her calling. It is very positive to see that 100% of the pastors indicate that they return a faithful tithe. The fact that most of the pastors opt for the Conference to deduct tithe from their monthly salaries is less positive. If the Conference placed the responsibility on the shoulders of the pastors, there would be a better indication of faithful tithing. This is something that would need further investigation so that the Conference can make sure the pastors are good stewards of their God-given means.

**Question 17: Percentage of tithe given as offering.** Contributing towards the congregational finances sets an example to the congregants, but also shows commitment to God and His cause. Finances are necessary for the disciple of God.



*Figure 17. Percentage of Tithe Given as Offering*

In trying to determine the amount of offering given by the pastoral staff, the question was asked in the way of a percentage of tithes. If the idea of a “second tithe” is taken as a measure, then there was a slight increase in pastors reaching that percentage – from 15% to about 17%. However, this is not seen as a goal for all pastors, as it is not taught by the stewardship department of the church. The increases in the 10 and 20% areas ((30.4 to 34%, and 24 to 35%) are good, but it was at the cost of the 50% group. It would seem that there is work to be done in the area of stewardship amongst the pastors. However, there is no set goal to be achieved.

**Question 18: Do you see yourself as a true disciple of Jesus and then please clarify your answer.** This question does not appear in the figures, as it was an open question to determine how the pastors view themselves in the line of discipleship. It is very difficult to determine if an answer is “good” or “bad,” but these answers were very interesting. Out of the 53 pastors completing the questionnaire in 2016 (the last one) twelve, or 22.6% did not give an answer to this question. It would be interesting to know why it was not answered. Of those answering the question,

there were many different answers. There were four unambiguous “no” answers – they are not true disciples of the Lord. It could be a perception, it could be that they just do not value their relationship with God, or it could be that they are not true disciples. The next observation is if such a person should be a pastor in the church? These outcomes are very difficult to determine.

Seven other pastors did not give a clear “yes” or “no,” but said either they are unsure, or they just elaborated about the question without being clear. The most interesting answer in this category came from a pastor who said that he/she is trying, but that Jesus can and will use imperfect people like him/her. This is very true – Jesus can use anyone, but the researcher wanted the workers to do self-evaluation. Out of the 53 respondents, then, 30 answered yes, with varying reasons given. Most of the interviewees were cautious, answering “yes” but then gave the corrective that they are still far from the ideal. The whole idea of discipleship being a growing, vibrant lifestyle came through loud and clear.

No one, not even a pastor, can be a true and perfect disciple of Jesus in his own strength. However, the fact that the pastors could acknowledge their shortcomings is a positive attribute. One pastor said “yes,” but then explained himself/herself by indicating that he/she needs a “revived spiritual experience.” This is something every follower of Jesus needs on a daily basis so that we can grow closer to Him. To end off this question, one other pastor gave a “yes” with an explanation that discipleship is not what you do, but what you are. Very true, but it is also known that what you are will show in what you do. Actions speak louder than words.

## **Summary of Results**

It is very difficult to determine a trend in the two sets of data. It would have been wonderful to have a noticeable improvement in all the criteria measured, but unfortunately, there is none. Here and there, positive changes are found, but just as many times, the change is negative. The short time used to try to get positive change, and the difficulty in measuring discipleship and spirituality accurately are two of the reasons that can be given for this. However, positive results are observable, as indicated by the results in question five. In regards to question five, about the time that pastors spent in reading the writings of Ellen G White, where there was also a slight improvement. However, it is very clear that over the period of eighteen months, there was not a significant change in the results.

## **Summary**

Very few conclusions can be drawn from the results of comparing the two sets of data, filled in eighteen months apart. The only assumption that can be made is that discipleship, spirituality and mentoring are not easily defined. These are concepts that cannot be determined by a questionnaire and a few interventions over a two-year period. It is clear that these indicators of spirituality need more time and effort to change noticeably in a group of pastoral workers. More study is necessary and more time needs to be spent on determining how these indicators can be improved. A summary and concluding remarks will follow in chapter six to end off this exposition.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Northern Conference and the approximately 65 pastors serving the Conference presented an excellent opportunity to study their spirituality and come up with a discipleship program to enhance their spirituality. As Ministerial Secretary, the researcher had access to the pastors and to the programs and training they received. In this way, the researcher could come up with a sustainable solution to the possibility of poor spirituality ruining the effectiveness and influence of the pastors on their parishioners, and on the public, they come into contact with.

In using every opportunity where pastors came together for Workers' Meetings and Conferences, the researcher could try and influence them to become better ambassadors for their Redeemer. In measuring the spirituality of the pastors before the interventions and then again after it, a picture could be drawn of the effectiveness of these interventions. This was done and conclusions drawn, but not before all necessary research was done into the topic of spirituality, discipleship and mentoring.

### **Background**

As mentioned in chapter one, the Northern Conference is one of four Conferences in South Africa and one of seven Conferences in the Southern Africa Union Conference (SAUC). It is situated in the northern parts of South Africa and includes four of the nine provinces of South Africa and close to half its population. There are opportunities to reach these ±25 million people with the gospel of Christ,

but pastoral ineffectiveness due to low spirituality could influence this process. The Conference, with a multicultural flavor of peoples, is dependent on a motivated, spiritually sound ministerial team.

This can only be achieved if the pastors are content in their commitment to God and also happy in their family relationships. To help the pastors to reach this standard of efficacy, this research was undertaken. It has as its ultimate goal an effective team of spiritual workers, committed to the Lord and with healthy, sound relationships with their God, their families, their parishioners and their communities.

### **Biblical and Theological Basis for the Study**

In studying biblical and prophetic material about the definitions and application of the team's spirituality and discipleship together with mentoring, the researcher attempted to come up with the basis of the research. Ellen White<sup>1</sup> summarizes the process of becoming a disciple in this way:

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion, but this does not prove him to be unconverted. Christ said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Nampa: ID, Pacific Press, 2000), 57.

The way people live their daily lives, the way they treat others, the way they react to how they are treated, this is what tells others that they are real disciples, that they have a relationship with God, that they are truly spiritual people. The biblical material studied, and the theological insights gained, are summarized by this quote. Discipleship is a life lived for God and seen in the way the disciple does the work God gives him/her to do; it is the way the disciple prays, studies, treats his/her family, what is done, eaten, exercised in the home; it is a life consecrated to God. The Bible is full of such examples – Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, etc. Biblical figures who exemplified what it means to be a faithful disciple of Jesus were used to come up with a definition of what a real disciple is. The pastor in the Northern Conference can and should be a true disciple of God.

### **Literature Study**

In looking at the insights of several Christian and even secular authors and what they write about the concepts of spirituality, discipleship and mentoring, a pattern was discovered. A disciple is a person who follows Jesus as his/her ultimate example and becomes more like Jesus on a daily basis. There is a very close, intimate relationship between the person and their Maker, making them spiritually strong disciples. A disciple has certain characteristics that were highlighted by the different authors, and eventually, the literature showed certain spiritual disciplines that real disciples would take part in on a regular basis.

These disciplines formed the basis of the questionnaire that was given to the pastors of the Northern Conference to complete. To determine the amount of time spent on different disciplines gives an idea of the pastors' spirituality. It is arbitrary, and people differ, but it was the only way to try to determine where the pastors were at in their spiritual walk with God. The true disciple of God is also a disciple-maker,

bringing the good news of a living Savior to others in his/her sphere of influence. No disciple can keep quiet if he/she is excited about something; he/she will not only guide and lead the parishioners, making them disciple-makers too but also training them to become more effective. He/she will be a mentor to others who need to come into a relationship with their Redeemer. It will result in an army of disciples ready to enter the last days of earth's history with confidence. One of the authors used<sup>2</sup> summarizes the ideas about discipleship and spirituality in this way: "Discipleship means knowing *him*, loving *him*, believing in *him*, being committed to *him*." It is all about God, the Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Nobody can be truly spiritually alive; nobody can be a true disciple; nobody can be a real disciple-maker, without Jesus as the most important One in their life. With this theological and literature basis in place, the research could begin.

### **Measuring Spiritual Growth of the Pastors in the Northern Conference**

With the foundation laid for determining the different parameters for measuring spirituality in the pastors, a questionnaire was developed. This questionnaire focused on spiritual disciplines and time spent on these on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. There was even a question on annual leave. So the questionnaire tried to cover as wide a spectrum of activities as possible, which the pastoral staff are engaged in, or should be involved in. In selecting the sample for the study, Roberts<sup>3</sup> suggests the following: "Ideally, an entire population would be used to gather information." As the population of pastors was about 60, this was not too

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<sup>2</sup>Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove: IL, Intervarsity Press, 2006), 76.

<sup>3</sup>Carol M. Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation* (Thousand Oaks: CA, Corwin, 2010), 149.

difficult to do, and there was no need only to use a sample. The questionnaire was filled out during a Workers Meeting in the beginning of 2015 and after several interventions to try and enhance the spirituality of the pastors, the same questionnaire was again completed during a Family Camp in June 2016. The two questionnaires were then analyzed and the results extrapolated to see what the effect of the interventions was. In this way, the researcher could try and determine what a discipleship program for pastors could look like. It was an interesting exercise that showed clearly what pastors are involved in on a daily basis and if they lived what they proclaim. (Literally to practice what you preach). An interesting quote from *Ministry*<sup>4</sup> stated the following: “The ultimate goal is that they become mature disciples of Jesus and, in turn, are prepared to lead others into discipleship with Christ. The Great Commission’s focus means to multiply the disciples.” Pastors should be experts at doing this, but it can only be a reality if the pastor is spiritually strong and growing.

### **Evaluation of Interventions**

As the results of the interventions came in, it became evident that there would not be a significant change in the answers from before and after the interventions. It seems that the way someone organizes his/her life becomes a habit not easily broken or modified, even in pastors. If they spend a certain amount of time in prayer and Bible study, this will not change for the better by a few lectures or expert advice. The Bible passage speaking about whether an Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots (Jer 13:23) is of importance here. The Lord alone can change us, so the

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<sup>4</sup>Michael Dörnbrack, “The Discipleship Challenge,” *Ministry*, May 2016, 6.

pastor will only change if the Holy Spirit is allowed to work in the heart and conviction comes.

It seems as if more time is needed and more interventions planned to ensure permanent change in spirituality. This can be further explored by students interested in this topic of pastoral spirituality and discipleship. Permanent change for the better can only be achieved with constant reinforcement of good spiritual disciplines, and the Holy Spirit working in the heart. Sanou<sup>5</sup> states the following as a definition of spirituality: “It is the quality of life which responds to God’s initiative and seeks to listen to the voice of God through a centering of oneself in Him, maintaining an openness to God in an absolute submission to His will and reflecting His love around us.” No wonder it is not something that can be changed in a minute. It is the work of a lifetime, and therefore change of spiritual habits does not happen fast; it takes time, effort, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. More time is needed for permanent, positive change to spiritual maturity and positive discipleship.

### **Evaluation Method Used**

In evaluating the data received from the questionnaire completed by the pastors before and after the interventions, graphs were mostly used. There was a significant amount of data and trying to project it in a concise, but legible form was challenging. A summary of the comparison is given on a single page, but due to the amount of information, each question was also set out in graph form. This made comparison easier and gave a exquisite idea of the direction in which the pastors went. It could be determined at a glance if there was an upward or downward trend. Unfortunately, there was very little movement which made interpretation easier but

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<sup>5</sup>Boubakar Sanou, class notes for CHMN/LEAD 706 Spiritual and Theological Foundation for Ministry, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, July 2014.

gave the impression of failure in the interventions. The conclusion drawn from the data is that more time is needed for a positive change to be visible. As mentioned before, discipleship is something worked on over an extended period of time, and spirituality can only come by effort and the Holy Spirit's intervention.

### **Conclusion**

If one has to come up with only one conclusion for the research done, it is not an easy task. It would have been so much easier if there were a definite upward trend in all the data after the eighteen months of interventions and training. Unfortunately, this was not seen in the data, and therefore there is real difficulty in formulating a firm conclusion. Perhaps the one conclusion that can be made is that there is need for constant growth in spirituality and discipleship among pastors who are active in district ministry. Without it there is stagnation and even burn-out among the clergy, as frustration sets in. The factor that is elusive is how this constant spiritual growth can be achieved. More research into this aspect of the study would have to be undertaken to come up with clear answers.

### **Recommendations**

To make clear and concise recommendations for the study does not come as easily as one would wish. The outcome that was hoped for did not materialize, and therefore it 's hard to be clear. However, the following recommendations may help for further study into this very current and universal problem of spiritual growth for pastoral ministers.

1. Any study that wants to look at the spirituality of pastors should be conducted over a longer period, perhaps even five years or longer. This is because change in spirituality is not easily measurable, and change takes time. It cannot be measured accurately over a short period. It could also be that pastors, in general, have a high spiritual maturity, which also indicates a longer period for change.

2. As the spirituality is measured by participation in spiritual disciplines, these disciplines must be clearly identified. The disciplines must also be explained well so that participation is not seen to be done to gain salvation, but to enhance a lasting and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Spiritual disciplines must be practiced, but it should never become one more thing to tick off on a list presented upon reaching heaven. Spiritual gifts are there because of salvation, not for salvation.
3. Perhaps pastors should be informed about the idea – in other words, they must be acutely aware of what the study is about and what the researcher is trying to do. On the other hand, this could lead to results that are not accurate. In this study, pastors knew the researcher was doing research, but they had no idea why the study was done or what the outcomes of the research would be.
4. Pastors should be informed of the benefits of a balanced lifestyle. No one should be busy with spiritual activities all day long, leaving no time for leisure with the family. The pastor should also be involved in a daily regime of exercise and also make sure that adequate rest is part of the day.
5. A series of lectures on the spiritual disciplines, their value in enhancing the spirituality of individuals and how this can be achieved could help pastors to accept them. It could happen very easily that pastors do not take part in the disciplines because they do not understand the benefits that can be had.
6. A final recommendation is that there should be a group of lay Christian leaders chosen also to fill out the questionnaire so that it can serve as a comparison. This just to try and determine what pastors' spirituality is compared to church members. This can be used as a basis or control group of similar size to just give more structure to the research.

### **Final Summary**

During the research period, the researcher was actively involved with the pastors and came to the realization that pastors are not easily put into a certain mold. They are unique individuals with their likes and dislikes, their peculiar habits and personality traits. Therefore, to try to follow a one-fits-all approach with pastors can never work. They need to be treated as individuals with their own set of strengths and weaknesses, who are committed to serving the Lord. Humans react differently when faced with a study and when certain outcomes are expected. Change also does not take place at a certain speed, but every individual reacts in his/her own way. Lastly, spirituality is not something easily understood or defined but manifests itself in different ways in an individual. More study is needed to determine a discipleship

program that would help pastors serve their parishioners and the community more effectively.

## APPENDIX

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How much time do you spend daily in prayer?  

<1/4hr	>1/4-1/2hr	>1/2 –1hr	1hr+
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2. How much time do you spend in Personal Bible Study?  

<1/4hr	>1/4-1/2hr	>1/2 –1hr	1hr +
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3. How often do you fast for spiritual reasons?  

Once a week	Once a month	Once a year	Never
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4. How often do you normally do your Lesson Study?  

Daily	Once a Week	More than once a week	Not at all
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5. How much time do you normally spend in reading the Spirit of Prophecy daily?  

<1/4hr	>1/4-1/2hr	>1/2 –1hr	1hr +
--------	------------	-----------	-------
6. Do you take time out to meditate about your spiritual life?  

Often	Rare	Never
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7. How much time do you spend with your family daily?\_\_\_\_\_ hours
8. Approximately what percentage of your annual leave do you usually take?  

<25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
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9. How often do you take leisure time with your family/friends?  

Weekly	Monthly	On rare occasions
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10. How do you feel about the Church's health message?  

Positive	Neutral	Negative
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11. Are you a practicing vegetarian or vegan?      Yes    No
12. How would you describe your spiritual walk with God at the present moment?  

Positive	Neutral	Negative
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13. How much time do you spend daily in physical exercise?  

<1/4hr	>1/4-1/2hr	>1/2 –1hr	1hr +
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14. How much time do you spend daily witnessing to people other than your parishioners or prospects in the congregations you minister too?  

<1/4hr	>1/4-1/2hr	>1/2 –1hr	1hr +
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15. How much time do you spend daily in relieving suffering in your community?  

<1/4hr	>1/4-1/2hr	>1/2 –1hr	1hr +
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16. Do you bring a faithful tithe to God?                      Yes                      No
17. Generally, approximately what is your contribution as offerings to the cause of God?  

10% of tithe	20% of tithe	50% of tithe	100% of tithe
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18. Do you see yourself as a true disciple of Jesus and then please elaborate on your answer.

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## VITA

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