

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Doctor of Ministry
Emphasis in Mission

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

**TITLE: A STRATEGY FOR AN EFFECTIVE SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
TO FOSTER DISCIPLESHIP IN KEGUE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH, LOME, TOGO**

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The mission of the Church is to make disciples of all nations as stated in Matthew 28: 18 – 20. Both Scriptures and Ellen G. White's Writings show evidences that small groups constitute an environment propitious for the fulfillment of this God-given mandate.

The Church in Togo has been introduced to this particular ministry since 1995. Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church where this project was carried out, was established in 2000. From inception, it experienced a massive and rapid backsliding phenomenon which was a clear indication of a poor discipleship process. Many attempts to have small group ministry as a way of life in the church have been made, but they all failed. As soon as they were formed, they died out.

The purpose of this dissertation was to design and implement an effective strategy for small group ministry to foster discipleship in Kegue Church .

To fulfill this purpose, a theological and biblical foundation of small group ministry was laid from both Old and New Testaments. Then, a review of literature made to discover what scholars said about small groups as an instrument for Christian discipleship. Afterwards, a survey through a questionnaire was conducted to discover the perception of Kegue Church members on this ministry. The data collected through the survey were analyzed. The results of this analysis, combined with insights from the biblical foundation and the review of literature in relation with small group ministry, led to the design of a fourteen-point strategy to address the above-mentioned problem.

As the end of the program implementation, seven small groups were formed. However, the success of such a program should not be measured by the number of groups constituted, but by the commitment of those involved in this ministry. These seven small groups are lively and are well prospering. Their members are enthusiastic about attending their meetings. Group members testify that they are committed to their group's meeting because of the new insights they received on the biblical foundation of small group ministry.

According to testimonies, the community factor of small group ministry gave them an altogether perception of this ministry. They have all written their group covenant in which everyone participated and have already their Relief Funds operational. Every third Sabbath of the sixth month has been voted as Small Group Ministry Day for the church. It can therefore be said that the program has been a successful one.

It is true that more time is needed to say how successful was the program, but there are some signs--like the commitment of group members to gather besides the agreed meeting days to write the group covenant and the community bond they are

already experiencing, which presage a better future for small group ministry in the Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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A dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Semenu K. Amegan

February 2017

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Dedicated to Julienne, my wife, who has been supporting me for 32 years of ministry
especially during my Doctor of Ministry Program and also to my two beloved
daughters, Myriam and Grace

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter is intended to provide information concerning an overview of the study. It begins with the description of the ministry context of this research revealing the ineffectiveness of small group ministry in Kegue Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church after many years of existence. This has left a very negative impact on the discipleship process of the church resulting in massive backsliding of newly baptized members. This research therefore aimed to design a strategy for an effective small group ministry to foster discipleship in Kegue SDA Church. It involved the statement of the problem and purpose, justification of the study, delimitation, methodology and expectations of the research.

Ministry Context

Breaking a larger group into smaller ones for specific purposes is a strategy substantiated by Scriptures. The whole nation of Israel was organized in tribes. The tribes were broken into families and the families into households (Josh 7: 14). From the huge crowd that was following Jesus, He selected twelve among them for a special assignment.

White presents small groups as an instrument for growing church members and at the same time a workable means for winning new members.¹ The Church of apostolic was organized into small groups which gathered together in homes as stated

¹ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1925), 72.

in Rom 16: 5. 10. 11, which greatly influenced her rapid growth.

Luke also wrote about the ever-increasing number of the new church (Acts 2: 47; 5: 14; 6: 7; 12: 24). Ellen G. White indicated that this method for fulfilling the great commission is not a man-devised strategy but rather of God who never errs.²

It appears that this exhortation from God is not seriously taken into consideration in churches in Togo Mission of Seventh-day Adventist Church (TGM). As a matter of fact, there is no real small group ministry in Togo Mission. Small groups are formed just for the purpose of scheduled evangelism program and as soon as the program is over, the small groups also vanish. This has really affected negatively the discipleship initiative in TGM.

In 2009, the membership of TGM was 11,028. This was obtained through the request of the statistics department of the General Conference. A membership audit was conducted and at the end of the first quarter of 2010, it was discovered that the number of the current active members were 4887; the number of deceased members cannot explain the drastic difference between the two figures. In the process of auditing the membership, missing names of every local church were posted on noticed boards in the church and all members who have information on any missing member were asked to make it known to the church leadership. It was surprising to note that just a few active members knew something about such missing members. This reveals that local churches in TGM are not faithful communities as in the New Testament era in terms of keeping watch over the flock of God or retaining members in the church.

Another truth revealed by this sad situation was that a genuine discipleship process was missing in the management of these congregations. Failure in this

² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 115.

ministry has had an undesirable effect on evangelism throughout the Mission. Public evangelism which used to be at the root of the growth of the church in Togo in the past fifteen years was no more. People are more and more interested in miracles and healing. They are less enthusiastic to attend Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic meetings where the emphasis is putting on heart-changing messages rather than miracles and other prosperity gospels.

In September 2013, a public evangelistic effort was conducted in a rural area where experience showed that people in that area were more opened to the message of salvation in Jesus. The money invested in this effort was 413,000 CFA, the equivalent of 826 \$ US, and the most part of this amount was spent in pitching tent and hiring chairs. The result—11 baptisms, was meager comparatively to the financial means engaged. Of course, winning 11 souls for Christ was a good job, but it was really obvious there was a huge and a sensible disparity between the investment and the benefit.

Kegue SDA Church was chosen by the researcher as experimental field or sample frame for this research because of the unhappy and difficult experience the church went through at her inception. The church started with a public evangelism held in 2000 by a pastor who was then the director of the Global Mission project at the headquarters of the West-Central Africa Division in Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire). In total, sixty-one people who attended that crusade were baptized. Unfortunately, few months after this big celebration, only two people were left before one of them (an elderly man) also died leaving one person.³

In 2009, another public evangelism held by a preacher of the project 'SHARE

³The second, a woman is a faithful member with her two children, a girl and a boy, baptized into the church today and committed to their Lord and savior.

HIM' yielded thirty-one baptisms. Unfortunately, the same scenario repeated itself. Only one of them, a young man is in the church today. This is a clear indication that these people were not integrated in a discipleship process which would have helped them grow spiritually towards mature disciples.

There are many ways to fulfill the Mission of the church such as public campaigns, door-to-door evangelism, Revelation seminars, small group ministry, and visitations. The focus of this study is small groups as a tool for discipleship. Experts in church growth also recognize the efficiency of small group ministry in Christian discipleship. Commenting on the importance of small group ministry in carrying out the Mission of the church, Schilt observed

In no other situation can the function of the church be so fully carried out. In no other context can the Word of God be communicated with so much impact on the lives. The church today, as the church of the New Testament, needs 'the church in the house.' We need small groups.⁴

Chuck Colson also said: "No Christian can grow strong and stand the pressure of this life unless he is surrounded by a small group of people who minister to him and help him up in the faith."⁵ So it was the entire process of discipleship, winning people for Jesus and growing them, which is compromised when this ministry is neglected. White pointed out that through small groups, the Mission of the Church is efficaciously carried out. Church members are taken care of and new members are won for the kingdom.⁶

⁴ Clarence W. Schilt, *Dynamic Small Groups: How to Make Them Happen* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, n.d.), 21.

⁵ M. Scott Boren and Don Tillman, *Making Cell Groups Work: Navigation the Transformation to a Cell-Based Church* (Houston, TX: Cell Group, 2000), 15.

⁶ White, *Evangelism*, 115.

Statement of the Problem

From the New Testament, it is clear that small group ministry has proven to be one of the best ways to foster discipleship in the church. Unfortunately, this divine-appointed ministry is ineffective in Kegue SDA Church. After many attempts, six groups were formed but very soon after, three of them died out and the three others are agonizing according to the report of elders and deacons. Is it possible the approach used to teach this ministry lacked elements which would have made church members joyously involved? Is it possible that pastors have contributed to this failure through their indifference towards this ministry?

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this research was to develop, implement and evaluate a program for an effective small group ministry to foster discipleship in Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Justification

1. The current study has never been done in Togo Mission. It also attempts to open the leadership of TGM's eyes on the problem addressed in this study.
2. This dissertation will serve as a guide and becomes useful for training both within and outside churches in the Mission.
3. The current study is motivated by Scripture and Ellen G. White's writings and call for small group ministry.
4. The study hold high the efficiency for Christian discipleship (fellowship, evangelism, nurture and member retention)
5. Small groups constitute an ideal frame for winning back former church members.
6. It helps church members develop their spiritual gifts because it creates space for them to be fully involved.
7. It helps church pastors to be more effective in knowing their member's welfare through the visiting of the small groups, which in turn bring members closer to them.
8. Also the study of the facet of the ministry can be an efficient instrument for

- building church leaders because these groups' leaders are potential church leaders.
9. Small group ministry is also an extraordinary frame to teach stewardship and therefore enhancing the finances of the church.
 10. This project will help Kegue Adventist Church have effective small groups for discipleship.
 11. This study will help make a syllabus to facilitate training on this ministry.

Delimitation

Though the problem of ineffective small group ministry is a global problem of the whole Church in Togo, this study will be limited to Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church as pilot from which the project will be reproduced in other congregations. Small groups are used today in various fields such as in medicine, computer science. This study aims at using small groups for the purpose of Christian discipleship. The Bible version used in this dissertation is World English Bible (WEB), except where otherwise stated.

Methodology

The researcher employed the mix method (qualitative and quantitative) research design to achieve this project. The qualitative method will resort to key informants in order to evaluate Kegue Church current state of small group ministry. The quantitative method will include questionnaires, figures, tables, and graphics as vehicles for necessary information. Theological foundation for small group ministry and Christian discipleship will be laid through the Bible and Ellen G. White Writings.

Next, a review of literature will be done to discover the contribution of contemporary writers to this particular ministry for discipleship. A strategy for effective small groups will be designed, implemented, and evaluated on the basis of members' commitment to small group ministry and measurable indicators to estimate the appropriateness and the efficiency of the whole program. A summary of the

dissertation will be done and the lessons learned carefully written. Proper recommendations will be made to higher levels of the SDA Church organization and results of the research submitted to Togo Mission executive committee as well as Kegue Church board for possible implementation. On grounds of honesty and integrity, an authorization will be solicited from the Mission executive committee for using Kegue Church as research field and also for the time that will be used for the completion of this research.

Expectations from the Dissertation

First, upon the completion of this dissertation, it is expected that the members of Kegue Seventh-day Adventist will understand that small group ministry is God-intended way of managing and growing His church. Secondly, it is also expected that this ministry will constitute a good frame for their individual spiritual growth and an ideal environment to prepare them for the soon second coming of Jesus-Christ.

The third expectation from this research is that it will offer church members an environment where they could put into use their God-given abilities for their own growth as well as the growth of the entire congregation.

Fourthly, it is hoped that this dissertation will give a new insight of small group ministry to pastors, elders and other church leaders and will be a useful tool in their hands for promoting this divine appointed ministry in the life of the church.

Fifthly, it is expected that this study will be valuable for the whole Togo Mission in terms of increasing spiritual, numerical, and financial growth through members' education on Christian stewardship and Christian discipleship.

Sixthly, it is also expected that this research will serve the world wide church by benefiting other Missions or Conferences in Africa to improve their performances in advancing the Lord's Kingdom. Finally, it is the researcher's expectation that the

writing and the implementation of this project will strengthen his own and personal conviction in the divine origin of small group ministry for building spiritually strong Christian communities, which through their commitment to the work of God will hasten the second coming of their beloved Savior.

Definitions of Terms

Community: group characterized, at the same time, by plurality, oneness in purpose, feelings, and deep fellowship.

Discipleship: the process of adopting “the life and the ethics” of Jesus in view of the Christian blessed hope.⁷

Doing church: means church management in all its aspects.

Great Commission: means the gospel mandate given to all disciples in Matthew 28.

Magma Carta: means the fundamental law of the Church, all the life of the church is based on it. This great Commission gives direction to the Church.

Small group: “A small group is an intentional, face to face gathering of 3 to 12 people, meeting on a regular schedule, with the common purpose of developing relationships, meeting felt needs of group members, growing spiritually, and laying plans to lead others to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives.”⁸

Summary

In this chapter which is the introduction to this dissertation, the ministry context has been established. It underlined the reasons which led the researcher to

⁷ Lee C. Camp, “Mere Discipleship,” *Discipleship*, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.theopedia.com/discipleship>.

⁸ Kurt W. Johnson, *Small Groups for the End Time: A Practical Guide for the Twenty-First Century* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 75.

embark in this study. Then the problem of the research was stated and its justification given. Besides, the delimitation of the research, the methodology used, and the expectation from the study were spelled out. The chapter ended by the definition of some key terms. The next chapter will lay the theological foundation of the study through the Bible and Ellen G. White's Writings.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF DISCIPLESHIP AND SMALL GROUP
MINISTRY

The Mission of God’s Church is to make disciples of all men and women. This is the great commission given to the Church by Jesus Christ after His resurrection: “Therefore go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you.” (Matt 28: 19, 20) Whatever method the church uses to accomplish this divine-given assignment must be rooted in the Bible—the Word of God. This chapter aims at laying the biblical and theological foundations for discipleship and effective small group ministry to foster Christian discipleship. It will cover the concept of discipleship and small group ministry as tool for Christian discipleship in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Writings of Ellen G. White.

This study aims at designing a strategy that will make small group ministry an effective tool for fostering discipleship in Kegue Church . It is therefore important to start with the biblical foundation for discipleship. For if the word is not found in the Scriptures in Christian religion, it means a believer is living out his faith.¹

The key Bible passage for discipleship is undoubtedly Matthew 28: 19 – 20. Here, Jesus clearly defines His mandate to His Church. All ministries, all programs and all activities should aim at one single goal and that is making disciples of Him.

¹ Kandi Gallaty, “What Is Discipleship?,” *LifeWay Women All Access*, n.d., accessed February 19, 2017, <http://blog.lifeway.com/Womenallaccess/2017/02/07/what-is-discipleship/>.

Jesus used four action verbs to tell the church what is her Mission: “go”, “baptize”, “teach”, and “make”. It is observed that the first three verbs are “helping verb” while the only one in imperative is the fourth, that is “make disciples”. Therefore, from an exegetical point of view, the ultimate objective of evangelism is to make disciples.²

Concept of Discipleship in the Old Testament

The concept of discipleship, though rare, is nevertheless present in the Old Testament (OT). God wants all of His followers to be His disciples (Isa 8:16). He called Abraham to be His disciple and made him make disciples of his progeny (Gen 18: 19). It was expected of him to teach them God’s way. In other words, Abraham was to make of his descendants, disciples for God. Parents in Israel were expected to be themselves God’s disciples and to make of their children disciples as well (Deut 6:5-9).

Isaiah 50: 4 is a crucial Bible text because it gives the main characteristics of a disciple. It reads:

The Lord Yahweh has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with words him who is weary: he wakens morning by morning, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.

The SDA Bible Commentary notes that the word translated “learned” in NKJV, literally means “the learners.”³ So according to this Bible text, “those who are taught”, “the learners” or “the disciples” (LSV) are essentially characterized by their attentive listening to their teacher. The disciple is the one who attentively listen to his

² Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 4th ed. (St Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 576.

³ Francis D. Nichol, ed., “Learner [Is 50: 4],” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 4:282.

master and follow in his steps. Anyone who is willing to be taught by God and takes the decision to obey Him is God's disciple. The concept of disciple is obvious in the New Testament (NT). In this section, this concept in the NT will be explored.

The Concept of Discipleship in the NT

To establish the biblical and theological foundation for discipleship in the NT, the Bible references related to this concept will be given and the principal characteristics of Christian disciple they reveal will be stated. Moreover, Acts 14: 21-22 will be studied for its importance in understanding the concept of discipleship.

1. Matt 10: 24- 25—Christian disciple is ready to endure mockeries and mistreatments for the sake of his faith.
2. Luke 14: 26—Christian disciple loves Jesus his Master above any person else. He should be ready to do Jesus' will above anyone else's will.
3. Luke 14: 27—He is ready to pay the price of his allegiance to God and this price includes death.
4. John 8: 31—Christ's disciple is faithful to the Word of God even in face of trials. Obedience to the Master is a visible sign of a true disciple. (Luke 6: 46)
5. John 13: 34 – 35—Christian disciple under the new covenant loves continually everybody as Christ loves him/her.
6. John 15: 8—He bears fruits to the glory of God the father. A comparison with 1 Peter 2: 12 shows that the fruits spoken of in this verse are the good works all Christians are exhorted to perform. God is glorified by the good works of His children.
7. Matt 4: 19—Christian disciple shares his faith and wins people for God's kingdom.

The experience of Paul and some disciples reported in Acts 14:21-22 seems to be crucial for understanding the concept of Christian discipleship. After having made disciples in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, forced by the circumstances, they came to Derbe where they preached the good news.

Those who believed became disciples (Acts 14: 21). Then Paul and his

companions returned to these three cities where they previously had made some disciples and continued building the faith of these new disciples (vs. 22). So according to Scriptures, discipleship is an ongoing process of preaching the good news, and confirming the souls of those who have become disciples. This is done through continual exhortations and teachings until they mature and bear fruits to the glory of their Master. Ellen G. White wrote a lot on Christian discipleship. In the next section, her views on this concept will be considered.

Discipleship in Ellen G. Writings

White saw discipleship as a process. She considered Peter's self-confidence that led him to deny His Master as an attitude of his "early discipleship."⁴ Her writings contain essential features of true discipleship such as unconditional love for Jesus.

Discipleship and Unconditional Love for the Master

Love for the Master is the first evidence of Christian discipleship. All in discipleship is a matter of love for Jesus including our compliance with His commandments (John 14: 15). Commenting on Jesus' words to Peter in John 21:15 – 17, white indicated that the question "do you love me" is significant and essential. Love for Christ is the condition for Christian discipleship.⁵

Jesus emptied Himself to become the substitute of all human beings. He humbled Himself by taking the form of a bondservant for the sake of the entire humanity, that character His followers must imitate.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1900), 152.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 183.

Discipleship and Self-denial

Being a disciple of Christ means following in His footsteps. The Scriptures speaks of Christ denying Himself and “taking the form of a servant” (Phil 2: 7), whosoever wants to be His disciple should be willing to deny himself or herself and be ready to pay the price of his/he choice.⁶ Obedience is fundamental in Master/disciple relationship. Jesus implied that it is hypocritical to call Him Lord and not comply with His teachings (Luke 6: 46).

Discipleship and Obedience

Obedience is crucial in discipleship process. Ellen White insisted time and again on obedience as a genuine sign of discipleship. Commenting on Jesus’ words in Matthew 7: 21, she considered obedience as the true sign which identifies Christian disciples.⁷

In addition, she came back on this virtue as a significant test of this process. She defined obedience, this authentic evidence of discipleship, as “service and allegiance of love.”⁸ “Tell me whom you associate with and I will tell you who you are” says the old adage. It means that, generally people behave like friends they walk with. Every disciple is expected to honor His Master by producing the same fruits He bears.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 350.

⁷ White, *Gospel Workers*, 226.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1892), 60.

Discipleship and Fruit Bearing

White defined the fruit Christ's disciple is expected to bear as "purity of character, unselfish deeds, and Christlike words."⁹ She associated fruit bearing with spiritual growth.¹⁰ All Christians and ministers are called to proclaim to non-believers the praises of their heavenly Father (1 Pet 2: 9). The fruits they bear are the best way to fulfill this purpose for which they are called. They preach the Word of God by the fruits they bear.¹¹

The concept of discipleship is present in both Testaments though it is more explicit in the New Testament. A disciple is essentially characterized by an attentive listening to his master, following in his footsteps, obeying Him in all things, and bearing fruits to His glory.

Having laid the biblical and theological foundations of the concept of discipleship, it is logical to do the same for small group ministry. This will be done by exploring the Bible and Ellen G. White's Writings. Also small groups for the purpose of community, efficient management and training for gospel ministry are all considered.

⁹White, *Australasian Union Conference Record: Words of Counsels* (Ellen G. White Estate Inc. November 15, 1903).

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Release*, vol. 14 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 33.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 40.

Small Group Ministry

Small Group Ministry for the Purpose of Community in the OT

The first divine purpose for small group ministry is community which is in oneness of thoughts, feelings, and purpose among the group's members. It is said that small group is God-created ministry deriving from God's very nature and purpose. It is a revelation of God's communal image.¹² Therefore, a small group where this is missing is just an ordinary gathering of people whose objective is anything except growing in Christ. Such small group could be just a club. God is a community and He created human beings in this communal image because of His Unity and Oneness with the Father. Humanity could not experience its self-realization apart from community. Why is community so important for an effective small group ministry? The answer is so simple and so clear. God created humanity in his own communal image and Christian small groups constitute the revelation of that communal image of God.

God exists and works in community. Both Testaments assume Godhead's community. Community implies plurality in oneness. God is one and plural at the same time as Bill and Robinson said: "The entire Bible proclaims that God (expressed singularly) exists from eternity and for all time in community as the Trinity (plurality)."¹³ In the Old Testament, the very opening verse (Gen 1: 1) attests to this divine reality. Commenting on this opening Bible verse, Clarke observes:

The verb '*bara*', he created, being joined in the singular number with this plural noun, has been considered as pointing out, and not obscurely, the unity

¹² Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 22.

¹³ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 22.

of the Divine Persons in this work of creation. In the ever-blessed trinity, from the infinite and indivisible unity of the Persons, there can be but one will, one purpose, and one infinite and uncontrollable energy.¹⁴

From the start, humankind was created for community. The communal God who created Adam in His communal image declares: “Yahweh God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone.” Adam was surrounded by many other creatures like animals, rivers and oceans full of fish, majestic trees, beautiful flowers with their agreeable scent, and other creatures; yet he was alone. It is possible to be in a crowd of people and yet feel alone. Everything that was created before Adam was intended for his happiness but he was missing a creature like him with whom he could fellowship.

The words “It is not good that the man should be alone” suggest that the first purpose of creating Eve was to provide for them a frame for community and fellowship. Procreation for the purpose of multiplication in order to fill the earth seems not to be the most important. Scriptures says that procreation will be not necessary in the new earth and new earth (Matt 22: 30). Since it is not good for man to be alone, God provides the solution. He creates ‘a help meet for him’, somebody who is appropriate to his need.¹⁵

Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. He made the rib, which Yahweh God had taken from the man, into a woman, and brought her to the man (Gen. 2: 21 – 22).

God could have created Eve through the same process as Adam; that is forming her from the dust of the ground, and breathing into his nostrils the breath of

¹⁴ Adam Clarke, ed., *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (London, UK: Applegate, Pounsford & Co., 1810), 27.

¹⁵ Francis D. Nichol, ed., “An Help Meet [Gen 2: 18],” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 1:225.

life. Could it be that He did not purposely? The entire humankind is of one single blood (Acts 17:26) and this oneness of blood should be a motive for human community.

This is implied by Adam's response to God giving him a help meet. He exclaimed: "This *is* now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." (Gen. 2:23) The expression "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" of verse 23 probably is a Hebrew idiom meaning "one blood" or "one person" (Judges 9: 2; 2 Sam. 5: 1). Adam and Eve formed a community and this was God's ideal for man and woman. They were created to complement each other and to depend on one another.¹⁶ Adam was created communal and could not be complete and happy as long as he was alone. Man was created social creature and as such it was not good that he lived alone¹⁷.

In God's sight, two persons are representative of a community as shown in this recommendation He gave Israel with regard to condemning somebody guilty of any kind of sin. In Deut. 19: 15, it is stipulated: "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established." Adam and Eve together was really a community.

Adam and Eve's community was meant for fellowship. Man needs fellowship for his well-being.¹⁸ This is written in his nature for he has been created in God's image. It is observed that "this image is not one of aloneness"¹⁹. Fellowship with one

¹⁶ Ibid., 210.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1: 225 – 226.

¹⁹ Russell C. Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life & Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1998), 95.

another and with God their Creator therefore is part of their human nature. Adam and Eve “were created to live in community with each other and with God... The essence of sin is the attempt to live apart from community; in isolation from others. Human beings are not complete apart from fellowship with others.”²⁰

And the Sabbath day is meant for experiencing this two-dimension fellowship—fellowship with God and with others. Maybe, it is the reason why the first full day God gave Adam and Eve was the Sabbath day. Adam and Eve did not need rest in terms of relieving themselves of some fatigue. They had not done any work yet. The Sabbath, the seventh day of the Creation was their first full day. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that the main purpose of the Sabbath is not physical rest. God gave Adam and Eve the Sabbath “in order that they may spend time developing community with Him and with one another.”²¹ God’s intention was that this two-dimensional fellowship should be perpetuated through the ages.

It was God’s wish that Adam’s descendants never forget their brothers. After Cain have murdered Abel, God calling on him said: “Where is Abel, your brother?” So it can be said that the Lord wants His communal image in which he created man in the beginning to continue from generation to generation.

Loving God with all one’s heart, with all one’s soul, and with all one’s might (Deut 6:5) and loving one’s neighbor as oneself (Lev 19:18) is what the Lord requires of His people. God’s children are forbidden to take vengeance, or bear any grudge against their fellow brothers (Lev 19: 18) Loving one’s neighbor implies opening one’s hand to needy brothers and sisters (Deut 15:11). God’s church today should

²⁰ Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life & Mission of the Local Church*, 95.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

excel in keeping these commandments than ancient Israel did. Christian solidarity and fellowship should characterize the church of the New Testament and small groups should be the ideal frame to experience in a special way these divine virtues with one another.

It is a natural law that every living creature that is not growing end up dying. Christian small group is a living community made up by men and women. For this living community to be growing, it must be continually strengthened. Community is strengthened through mutual visitation. An African proverb says that mutual visitation among brothers makes the brotherhood. The example of Job's children is an illustration of this community through mutual visitation. The book of Job chapter one and verse 3 reads: "And his sons went and held a feast in the house of each one upon his day; and they sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them." (ASV) Job's children are bound in community and this community was being taken care of and strengthened through visiting one another and sharing meal together.

Christian small groups will grow strong through this community model. As much as possible, the meetings will be held among the group members in turns. This will have the advantage of breaking the monotony and sharing the burden of hosting the meetings. It also gives to all the opportunity to feel useful to the group. In this process of strengthening the community, potential threats are to be always remembered. One of them is seen in the story of Aaron and Miriam revolt against Moses.

The Scriptures reports in Numbers 12: 1: "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Cushite woman." The problem here is a racial issue. Moses' wife is not Jew but a Cushite from Egypt. Race, ethnic group, tongue factors may become threatening to

the unity of the group. The spirit of community begins to suffer when people are judged on the basis of their race, ethnic group, tongue, gender, social status and culture. Prejudices must be avoided for it is an obvious sign of spiritual immaturity. This is so important to the cohesion.

True Christians are brothers and sisters. They should be always working for unity and mutual fellowship. God's intention for His children is to share in the joy of brotherly unity and fellowship. David experienced this fellowship in the cave of Adullam while his brothers and parents came to him (1Sam. 22: 1). He expressed this joy resulting from brotherly unity and fellowship in a song found in Psalms 133: "See how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity!" It is observed that the term 'brethren' used here indicates a strong bond of intimacy.²²

David goes on and compares this joy to the sacred ointment poured on the head of the high priest on the day of his anointment and to the dew of Hermon. Brotherly love is like a perfume. It is diffusive. Its influence is a blessing to all in the family. It is also refreshing and life-giving.²³ This is the experience God intends for all the members of His Church and this is the foretaste of the fellowship and the communion to be, during the heavenly reunion where all the redeemed from everywhere and of all ages will be gathered together in His presence.

God had another purpose in creating man and woman as community. He wanted them to multiply. In substance, he said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1: 28). The creation of the first human community itself was meant to enlarge the heavenly family as Ellen G. White said: "Infinite love—how

²² "Brethren" [Ps 130: 1], *SDABC*, Francis D. Nichol, ed., "Brethren [Ps 130: 1]," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 3:918.

²³ Francis D. Nichol, ed., "Ointment [Ps 133: 2]," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 919.

great it is! God made the world to enlarge heaven. He desires a larger family of created intelligences.²⁴

Therefore God, in creating the first couple, created them with the capacity of procreation, of multiplication. “They were made ‘in the image of God’ and it was the Creator’s design that they should populate the earth.”²⁵ The law of multiplication or growth is therefore inherent to the life of community. The Christian small group is destined to multiply giving birth to another small group and this is part of the discipleship process. Community is essential to individual spiritual and emotional growth as well as to the numerical growth of the group.

Christian discipleship also involves people management and small group ministry helps manage the church in an efficient way. In the next section, small groups for the purpose of people management in Old Testament will be considered

Small Group Ministry for the Purpose Efficient of People Management in the OT

Church management is part of the church’s ministry and Jethro’s advice to Moses his son in-law is a classic model of people efficient management through small groups. The account is recorded in Exodus 18: 13 – 23. Shortly after their crossing the Red Sea, the children of Israel encamped in the wilderness of Sin. Jethro, Moses’ father in-law having heard the great deliverance the Lord performed in favor for His people in Egypt, took Zipporah Moses’ wife and their two sons and came to the place where Israel has encamped.

After asking of news about one another, Moses narrated to Jethro the complete scenario of God’s deliverance from their Egyptian bondage, how the Lord forced

²⁴ Ellen G. White, *Self-Love or Self-Sacrifice* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1908).

²⁵ Ibid.

Pharaoh to let them go, God's killing the firstborns of Egyptians, the crossing of the Red Sea, God's fighting for them against all their enemies. Jethro, who was the priest of Midian rejoiced over Yahweh's goodness toward Moses and Israel, blessed the Lord and offered to God peace sacrifices. Then it is said: "It happened on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from the morning to the evening" (Exod. 18:13). Jethro observed the scene all day and then said to his son-in-law: "What is this thing that you do for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning to evening?" (Verse 14) Moses was alone to manage the entire people and it was obvious that he was not efficient and not performing. He was wearing away himself and the people unnecessarily. So Jethro advised him to split the people into smaller units and place over them capable men.

Moreover you shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God: men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. Let them judge the people at all times. It shall be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they shall judge themselves. So shall it be easier for you, and they shall share the load with you (Exod 18:21-22).

By so doing, the task will be easier for Moses because these units' leaders will be sharing the load with him. Moses undoubtedly abided by the advice of his father-in-law because he saw in it God's wisdom. Commenting on Jethro's advice to Moses, Clarke observed that "it was probably given under the immediate inspiration of God; for after such sacrificial rite, and public acknowledgement of God, the prophetic spirit might be well expected to descend and rest upon him."²⁶

It is observed that by acting in harmony with Jethro's advice Moses testified

²⁶ Adam Clarke, ed., "[Exo 18: 13-23]," *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy* (London, UK: Applegate, Pounsford & Co., 1810), 250.

that he acknowledged its divine origin.²⁷ Commenting on the theme of the book of Exodus, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* reads: “The stories of the Exodus speak to the imagination of young and strengthen the faith of those who are older. They call for confidence in God’s leadership today, and bid us to follow humbly wherever he may lead.”²⁸

So it may be said that the leadership that Jethro proposed to his son-in-law is God’s leadership and that we are bidden to follow it humbly. The management of the big community should be decentralized; this would be of a great benefit both for the leader and the followers. Social justice is crucial to the spirit in the community and it is rightly noted that “The system proposed by Jethro would guarantee fair treatment for all”²⁹ and this is essential for a healthy community.

The tribal organization of the Israelites also offers a small groups model. In Achan’s Affaire, God indicated to Joshua a strategy to find out the one who was the cause of the defeat of the whole nation. The entire congregation was to come forth by tribe, family, household, and man.

In the morning therefore you shall be brought nearby your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which Yahweh takes shall come nearby families; and the family which Yahweh shall take shall come nearby households; and the household which Yahweh shall take shall come near man by man. (Jos.7: 14).

The organization of Israel from inception gives an illustration of community. *Seventh-day Bible commentary* observes that Bible books like Chronicles, Ezra,

²⁷ Francis D. Nichol, ed., “Hearkens [Exo 18: 24],” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 1: 591.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 493.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 591.

Nehemiah, and other books give evidence that genealogical records in Israel were carefully preserved. These records attested that Achan was from the tribe of Judah.³⁰ The individual belonged to the household, the household belonged to the family, and the family belonged to the tribe and the tribe was part of the entire congregation.

In the book of numbers, it reported a census taking. The total number of the children of Israel who were twenty years old and above was six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty. Managing such a big crowd would be too difficult indeed even impossible for Moses, though seconded by Aaron. To make it easier and efficient for them the management of this big number of people, God instructed Moses to structure the whole congregation into smaller units. The smallest unit was the family or the household. So when it came to encampment as they were journeying through the desert, they were “all camped in perfect order, under their respective standards, at a distance from the tabernacle.”³¹ This arrangement of the entire people helped Moses have his eyes on each member of the nation through the supervision of these rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. The needs of every single member were thus taken into consideration and attended to. In the same manner, breaking a larger congregation into small groups makes easier and more efficient its management. In this manner, people are all attended to easily and more efficiently. Frustrations are avoided and this creates an atmosphere for a genuine spirit of community of love. Such an environment lead church members to involve willingly themselves in church activities and this contributes to their spiritual growth and to the prosperity of the church as a whole.

³⁰ Francis D. Nichol, ed., “According to Your Tribes [Josh 7: 14],” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 2:209.

³¹ Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist, 1870), 1: 325.

Towards the end of his life and at the inception of the reign of Solomon his son, David organized the Levites, the priests, the musicians, and the army into smaller units for efficient service. The following section presents small groups as a means for an efficient service in the Old Testament.

Small Group Ministry for Efficient Service in the OT

As a wise organizer, David structured the corps of the Levites, the priests, the musicians, and the army for more efficaciousness in their roles. 1 Chronicles 23- 26 deals with the organization of Levites and the priests. In 1 Chronicles 23, the number and the duties of the Levites are summarized. They were to fulfill the role of officers and judges, and doorkeepers. They were to serve by turns.³² Chapter 24 presents the organization of priests. They were divided into 24 classes for the purpose of service (vs. 3). Chapter 25 shows the organization of the singers' corps. The two hundred fourscore and eight singers were divided into 24 classes for the service (vs. 1). Chapter 27 presents the organization of the army corps. The twenty and four thousand men were grouped into twelve divisions and each division was to serve one month. For the purpose of an efficient service, David organized the religious, civil and military life of Israel. The Levites, the priests, the choristers, and the army were divided into small units.

But dividing a large church into small groups for the purpose of doing church has not only advantages. It has also potential negative aspects. There is a danger for the various small groups to be given up to unfair competition and begin to see each other as a rival. Members unconsciously, become clannish seeking their groups'

³² Francis D. Nichol, ed., "Porters [1 Chr 23: 25]," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 3:191.

interests instead of the interests of the entire congregation. New members of these competitive small groups run the deadly risk of not being exposed to other brethren so that they would not know them and they themselves would be unknown to these brethren. Thus, the overarching purpose of community is lost. Another likely negative result is the risk for members of a small group which is not prospering to leave the church by leaving their unhealthy small group. All these potential negative aspects of small group ministry should not be ignored. Proactive strategies should be thought of ahead of time to prevent them.

Small group ministry is also supported by the New Testament. Small groups as a tool of training for God's service, managing efficiently the church, and building community and fellowship is seen throughout the gospel, the book of Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles of Paul, John, James, and Peter.

Small Group Ministry for Training and Ministry in the NT

The first small group of the NT was the Twelve. From the many people who were following the Lord, He purposely chose twelve among them. Luke reports: "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Luke 6:12, 13). Mark adds that Jesus chose them so that they should be with Him (Mark 3:14). It is evident from the gospel account that the Lord selected a small group from the large crowd which was following Him for the purpose of service. Christ's strategy was to use a small group to reach effectively a bigger group. Small group was essential to Christ's strategy.³³

³³ John Mallison, *Small Group Leader: A Manual to Develop Vital Small Groups* 11 (Halifax

Commenting on the call of the twelve whom Jesus named “apostles”, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary says: “The appointment and the ordination of the Twelve was an event of a major significance in the Mission of Jesus.”³⁴ Jesus was about to establish His kingdom of grace and His appointing the Twelve may be seen as an official inauguration of His kingship, and his speech on the Mount considered as both His investiture address and the constitution of His newly established kingdom.³⁵ The Lord, after spending the whole night on the mountain with His father in earnest prayer, descended and called His disciples to Himself. Out of them, He chose twelve and named them “Apostles”. The biblical account specifies that “He appointed twelve that they might be with Him” (Mark 3: 14) which means that He chose them to “be His disciples, or learners in His school and assist Him in his work.”³⁶

In King James’s version, verse 14 reads: “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.” So the very purpose of their ordination was clearly spelled out. They were ordained for the Lord’s service. Jesus appointed twelve men as a small group to be trained so they may be able to take over when He will depart for Heaven and this group could be assimilated to a small group. Small groups are an ideal frame for training church members for God’s work. In small group setting, members easily discover their spiritual gifts and have opportunity to put them into practice for their spiritual growth. Small groups are also

Street Adelaide, South Australia: Openbook, 1996), 3.

³⁴ Francis D. Nichol, ed., “Twelve [Mark 3: 14],” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 5: 593.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 594.

presented in the gospel as a tool for an efficient church management.

Small Group Ministry for Efficient Management in the NT

The story recorded in Luke 9:10-17 offers a good illustration of a small group as a tool for an efficient church management. After their training, Jesus sent the Twelve two by two for Mission. On their return, they gave Him a report of their Mission work. The Lord invited them to a deserted place so that they could rest for a while. But the crowd seeing them departing ran ahead of them to the place. When Jesus and His disciples came out of the boat, they saw a big crowd already assembled. Jesus felt compassion for them and forgetting that they went there for rest, He began to teach them. As the time was far spent, the disciples advised Him to send the crowd away so that they might get something to eat. But the Lord having been told that there were five loaves of bread and two fish said to the disciples: “Make them sit down by fifties in a company” (Luke 9: 14, KJV).

The crowd was estimated at five thousands men and it was obvious that attending to them without neglecting anyone required a wise organization. The solution the Lord gave the disciples was to minister to them in small groups. He instructed them to have all of them seated in groups of hundred and fifties. From the organization the Savior suggested, it is clear that it is easier and more efficacious to attend to a big number of people by dividing them into smaller units. In small settings, the probability that everyone be ministered to is far higher than it is in the frame of a big number of people. As it is observed: “The orderly arrangement of so large a throng probably was necessary in order that all might be reached readily with the bread from heaven they were about to receive.”³⁷

³⁷ Francis D. Nichol, ed., “By Hundreds, and by Fifties [Mark 6: 40],” *Seventh-day Adventist*

In Christian small groups, the chance for every single member to be attended to is bigger. Frustrations are avoided because everybody feels belong to the group. People feel valued because they are responsible for something in the group. Such atmosphere is conducive to their spiritual development. Community is a major factor for Christian discipleship and small groups constitute an important tool to create this friendly and brotherly atmosphere in the Church.

Small Group Ministry for Community in NT

Jesus was so concerned with the spirit of community in His Church. He earnestly prayed for it. He even likened the type of community He intended for His owns to the divine community, the one which exists between the Father and Himself. He said: “Not for these only do I pray, but for those also who believe in me through their word; that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us.” (John 17: 20, 21). He went on and prayed for a ‘perfect oneness among them. (vs. 23) And the Lord made this unity among His disciples the very witness which testifies that He is sent by the father. Jesus said that mutual love among His followers is the visible sign which shows that they are truly His disciples (John 13: 35). So it should never be forgotten that unity and fellowship among Christ’s followers is evangelism. It proclaims more than anything else the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus. This is a witness against which it is hard for unbelievers to stand and it constitutes a magnetic force which has power to attract them to the Savior. This was the case of the apostolic Church. Luke forcefully stressed on unity among the disciples through Bible study, prayer, worship and fellowship by sharing their consumer goods with one another (Acts 2). He concluded

Bible Commentary (SDABC) (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 5: 618.

and made the important point that this spirit of community of love opened the way for the Lord to add more and more converts to the church (Luke 2:47).

Jesus also pointed out human's community using the example of Adam and Eve. When a question was asked Him about the lawfulness of divorce by the Pharisees, He answered them referring them back to the book of Genesis. In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve and through the bonds of marriage, made them a community. "So then they are no longer two but one flesh" (Matt 19: 6). Here also, Scripture teaches that two people are sufficient to constitute a community. He said: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in the midst of them" (Matt 18: 20).

This text is a key text because it gives an essential definition of what a small group is. It is true that the Lord was not primarily talking about a gathering for the purpose of worship. However, it applies as well to any gathering which is done in the name of the Lord. So in the Savior's eyes, two or three persons are sufficient to constitute a small group. Above all, the Lord reveals in this Bible passage what characterizes a Christian small group. It is His presence in the midst of those gathered together.

Consequently, people who gather as a Christian small group should seek and cultivate Jesus' presence. To be gathered together in Jesus' name also means to seek His glory in all that is done in this gathering. A comparison of 1 Corinthians 10: 31 to Colossians 3: 17 leads to this conclusion. In the first passage, Christians are exhorted to do whatever they do to the glory of God. In the second one, they are admonished that whatever they do in word or in deed, they should do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. It could be concluded that doing something in the name of Jesus simply means doing that thing to the glory of God.

The spirit and the mind of Jesus should characterize any Christian small group gathering. The spirit and the mind of Jesus are what community is all about. The spirit of community was the major characteristic of the home churches of the NT and in it lies their spiritual strength. It is important to note that the very essence of a small group is community which may be defined as oneness in plurality and plurality in oneness. Somebody would say ‘unity in diversity and diversity in unity. Any human gathering which is not fundamentally characterized by oneness in plurality, that is community, is not a small group biblical speaking. Adam and Eve who constituted the first human small group were one flesh. They were one and no more two (Matt. 19: 5).

The book of the Acts of the Apostles offers a model of community that the Church through the ages should emulate. After the departure of their Master, the Eleven returned to Jerusalem and “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren” (Acts 1: 14). They had put away all their dissensions and were bound together with bonds of Christian love. They were united, they were one. And as a result of being in community, Jesus fulfilling His promise sent His Spirit on them.

Then Peter was able to preach the Word of God with power and God’s Spirit working in their hearts, many people were converted to the gospel. They were about three thousand and from different racial and linguistic background. “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized. There were added that day about three thousand souls”(Acts 2:41). From one hundred and twenty, the number of Church members grew to about three thousand one hundred and twenty. It is said that they were all together putting their possessions in common and sharing them among themselves (Acts 2: 44, 45).

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary says on verse 44 that the expression “they were together” could be understood as a physical gathering or unity of spirit.³⁸ The members of this nascent community were devoted to four spiritual activities: Bible studies led by the apostles, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer. Then the question is: in which settings is it possible for this continually growing church to hold these spiritual activities with such an ever increasing number of people? The answer is in the temple and in the houses (Acts 2:46). As it is pointed out, “Although those of the Way frequented the temple in groups, they also met at home for their own love feast. There developed a close fraternity which involved community of goods.”³⁹

“Fellowship” was mentioned among the four spiritual activities these members of the Way are devoted to. The Greek word translated “fellowship” in English is “koinonia.” It is translated “fellowship” (1 Cor 1: 9; Phil 1: 5; 3: 10; 1 John: 3, 6, 7); “communion” (1 Cor 10: 16; 2 Cor 15:14). The same word refers to charitable contributions⁴⁰ (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor. 9:13; Heb. 13: 16). Fellowship here appears to be an unequivocal allusion to the community of brotherhood which made the first century Christian church a conquering church. The following comment is made on the word “koinonia” in this Bible passage: “It seems clear that in the present instance the word refers to the brotherhood that developed between the apostles and their

³⁸ Francis D. Nichol, ed., “Together [Acts 2: 44],” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 6: 149.

³⁹ Frederick Eiselen, “The Abingdon Bible Commentary,” ed. Edwin Lewis, Frederick Eiselen, and David George Downey, 1929, 1098.

⁴⁰ Francis D. Nichol, ed., “Fellowship [Acts 2:42],” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 6:148.

converts.”⁴¹

The breaking of bread in houses which “probably include both the Lord’s Supper and ordinary communal meals”⁴² is another sign of this brotherly community. Indeed, the expression “breaking of bread” is used both for love meal (agape) as well for the Lord’s Supper for it is noted that “To break bread is common Jewish idiom meaning ‘to eat.’”⁴³ Seventh-day Bible Commentary notes that “In Acts 2: 42, 46; 20:7, 11, either might be indicated.” It adds:

That the cup is not mentioned in connection with the bread does not necessarily exclude the possibility that the Lord’s Supper is here referred to. Although the context does not justify a dogmatic conclusion, it may be noted that the expression “breaking of bread” appears in a series descriptive of religious activities. Verse 41 speaks of believers receiving the ‘word’, of being ‘baptized’, and of being ‘added’ to the church. Accordingly, it may be reasonable to conclude that ‘the breaking of bread’ here referred to likewise had specific religious significance.⁴⁴

The breaking of bread occurs in contexts which are not contexts of the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 14:19; 15:36; Mark 8:6, 19; Luke 24: 30, 35). On the contrary, the reference to the Lord’s Supper is devoid of any ambiguity (Matt. 26:26; Mark. 14: 22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 10: 16; 11:24). Adventist Bible Commentary is not the only commentary which sees in the breaking of bread of Acts 2: 41, an allusion to the Lord’s Supper. Abingdon Bible Commentary arrived at the same conclusion: “The important and abiding elements of the life of these early believers were the apostolic teaching, unity in fellowship, and the observance of Eucharist and prayers.”⁴⁵ That the

⁴¹ Nichol, “Fellowship [Acts 2:42],” *SDABC*, 6:148.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Eiselen, “The Abingdon Bible Commentary,” 1098.

communal meal and the Lord's Supper are not necessarily separated in the early Christian Church is supported by Paul's strong admonition to the communities in Corinth:

But in giving you this command, I don't praise you that you come together not for the better but for the worse. . . . When therefore you assemble yourselves together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. For in your eating each one takes his own supper first. One is hungry, and another is drunken. What, don't you have houses to eat and to drink in? Or do you despise God's assembly, and put them to shame who don't have? What shall I tell you? Shall I praise you? In this I don't praise you. (1 Cor. 11: 17, 20 – 22).

Expression like “you come together not for the better but for the worse” implies the idea of spiritual concern of the apostle who considered himself as responsible for the spiritual development of the believers of the Church of Corinth. Moreover, verses 20 and 21 suggest that when believers of this community came together for the purpose of participating in the Lord's Supper, they were also supposed to come with their personal and individual ordinary meals. So it seems clear that in these communities, the Lord's Supper was taken along with brotherly love meal which is called agape. The fact that in the early Christian Church the communion service which is sometimes referred to as “breaking of bread” was held during the love meal which also is called “breaking of bread” is an irrefutable testimony of the community character of the early Christian Church because, while taking their communal meals they were at the same time participating in the communion with their savior and with one another.

Sharing meal together is one of the means of ratifying a covenant (Gen 31: 43 – 47). It is also a sign of an authentic relationship (Job 42: 11). Referring to Judas Iscariot, Jesus said: “He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me” (John 13: 18). This should not be the case because the one who eats with you is supposed to be your friend. Sharing meal together such as the Lord's Supper or the

communal meal (agape) is meant to consolidate the brotherly bonds between Christian fellows.

The home churches of the early Christian Church were small groups not too much because of the number of those who were gathered but more because they were communities of Christian love. A small group is essentially characterized by the spirit of community than by anything else. It can be said that in the church, there is a small group when those who are gathered are together, bound in community. This fellowship, this community was the catalyzer of the rapid growth of the church in during the first century. In this community atmosphere, there was a dynamic nurturing and people felt at home and did not desire any place else. Acts 4 tells how in a practical way this community and fellowship was lived out. "The multitude of those who believed was of one heart and soul. Not one of them claimed that anything of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common." (vs 32).

People sold their properties and gave the products to the apostles for all members to benefit from it. It was a 'commonwealth'. Verses 34 and 35 state: "For neither was there among them any who lacked, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made to each, according as anyone had need." Spiritual needs as well as material needs of people without any distinction were met and the result was qualitative and quantitative growth of the Church.

Luke summed up this growth in these significant words: "Day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. The Lord added to the assembly day by day those who were

being saved” (Acts 2: 46 – 47). ‘One heart’, one mind, and togetherness⁴⁶ were the characteristics of the early church and this spirit of community was the driving force that made the church grow rapidly both on individual level as well as on corporative level as recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

Paul had a great concern for the unity of the Church. First, he reminded them of the calling by which God has called them: “God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord” (1Cor. 1: 9). Christians are called, first, into the fellowship with Christ, that is unity with Him. Jesus illustrated this through the parable of the vine and its branches (John 15: 4, 5). This fellowship with Christ naturally will result in fellowshipping with one another. And this is the thought Paul was sharing with his brethren in Corinth. In substance, he told them, since they are called into fellowship with Christ; they should also be in fellowship with one another. But unfortunately, this was not the case. Whence his urgent plea: “Now I beg you, brothers, through the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1Co. 1: 10). He resorted to the image of the spiritual gifts and the human body to stress on the point he was making. As there are many spiritual gifts, their origin is the same, the Holy Spirit and their purpose is unique, for the profit of the whole church (1Co. 12: 4, 7).

Likewise, though the body is made of many members, it is only one body and its various members form a unity. The welfare of one is the welfare of all and the suffering of one is the suffering of all (1 Cor 12: 14 – 27).

⁴⁶ Sir Chief Olusegun Ayodele, *Christianity in Remoland 1892 – 2012* (Sagamu, Nigeria: Olu. Ayodele, 2014), 261.

This unity of the body of Christ, the Church, is acquired and fostered through avoiding some behaviors toward one another, and cultivating some other ones. Here are behaviors church members are admonished to avoid among themselves.

Judging one another and being a stumbling block to one another (Rom 14:13). James assimilated this to speaking evil one of another (Jas 4: 11). Criticism of all kinds should be discarded among the brethren. Speaking evil of the brethren is a sign of self-interest for it is trying to destroy the character of the other for the purpose of valuing oneself. The group members should not pass judgment on one another because only God is able to search hearts. In matter of conscience, each one is responsible to God and not to a fellow brother. Christians who are strong in faith should out of love be considerate of the consciences of those who are not. Going to law with one another (1Cor 6: 7).

Disputes among the brethren should not be brought to public Court; rather ways must be searched for to have them settled in the church through biblical approaches. For instance the dispute solving steps the Lord gave in Matthew 18:15-20.

Provoking one another out of vain glory (Gal 5:26). Provoking one another is done through words as well as deeds and may include “gossip, slander, and sharp dealing”⁴⁷ against one another. Such unchristian behaviors may end up in devouring one another (Gal 6: 15).

Lying to one another (Col 3: 9). The Greek word for lying here is ‘pseudos’ which give the English word “*pseudo*” which carries the idea of pretending to be something or saying something which is not what the reality is. The purpose is

⁴⁷ Francis D. Nichol, ed., “Bite and Devour One Another [Gal 5: 15],” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 6: 980.

cheating the other for his own advantage to his detriment. Lying to one another is destructive of confidence in one another and therefore leads to disruption of bonds.

If the behaviors mentioned above are detrimental to the unity of the group, there are others which are highly recommended because they contribute to strengthen it. They will be dealt with in the following paragraph.

Jesus put them all in what He calls “a new commandment”. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13: 34), He also added that this is a sign to identify His own. Also in verse 34 Paul admonished Christians that the love they are called to exercise toward one another should be a genuine one, devoid of any kind of hypocrisy. Romans 12: 9 highlights another commandment to be considered in order to fulfill the whole law. How is this mutual love demonstrated? As in (Rom. 13: 8 – 10). Through the following positive one another behaviors:

Showing brotherly love to one another (Rom 12: 10). Brotherly love is the bond uniting relatives, members of the same family. This is a blood bond. Church members, though from different origins, should regard one another as from the same Father, God. This is Jesus’ teaching. All Christians are brothers (Matt. 23: 8). As the members of the same family are brothers and sisters, so are church members, and as such they should love one another with a blood love.

Welcoming one another as Christ did (Rom 15: 7; Eph 4: 2; Col 3: 13). This commandment is put elsewhere in terms of bearing with one another. It supposes that there may have difference of opinions, tastes, and temperaments among brethren. Those minor things should not be allowed to break the brotherly bonds which unites the group members. The remedy for these differences is in this exhortation: “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise

minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Phil 3: 15). Church members should never forget that not two single persons are created identical.

Forgiving one another (Eph 4: 32). Another Christian virtue linked to bearing one with another is forgiving one another. It was central to Christ teaching regarding relationship among church members. (Matt 6: 12, 14, 15; 18: 21 – 35; Mark 11: 25, 26) stressed the need to forgive others is a prerequisite for God’s forgiveness and this was clearly stressed more in Jesus’ teaching. Christians are exhorted to forgive one another with the measurement of God’s forgiveness.

They are to do it in the same manner God is still doing to them (Eph 4:32; Col. 3: 13). God’s forgiveness derives from His goodness and compassion toward human beings. In the same manner, Christians are to show goodness and compassion toward one another by forgiving one another. The offender is admonished to recognize and confess, the confession is to be made one to another (Jas. 5: 16). Jesus went so far as to say that his disciples should always seek for a smooth relationship with their brethren for this opens the way for their prayers to be granted (Matt. 5: 24, 25).

Caring for one another (1 Cor 12: 25). This was one of the characteristic features of the apostolic Church. It is reported of them that all the believers were on heart and one soul and nobody was needy for those who have joyfully shared what they have with those who do not have so that at the end no one was lacking (Acts 4: 32, 34, 35). Widows were taken care of and plans were made for social justice to be observed. (Acts 6:1– 6) Paul call this “bearing one another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2).

Peter reminds church members that it is both responsibility and privilege for all to minister to one another by using the natural gifts and possessions they are blessed with to be a blessing to each other. (1 Pet 4:10) Nobody in the Church is too poor to be in one way or other a blessing to his fellow members. This ministry toward

one another would reveal itself also in time of natural disaster or other circumstances where hospitality should be shown. (1 Pet 4: 9).

Comforting one another (1 Thess 4: 18; 5: 11; Heb 10: 25). In most cases, this one another commandment is given in the context of the second coming of Jesus. When death strikes, Christian comfort is found in this blessed hope. Sometimes it is associated with mutual edification while looking forward to seeing the end of trials as a result of their faith when their savior will appear in the clouds of heaven. (1Thess 4: 18; 5: 11) Christians should never forget that they are keepers for one another and not resemble Cain who asked God if he was his brother's keeper. Through words of hope and encouragement, they should help one another to hold fast to their faith (Heb10: 23). Paul's call for Christ's disciples to love one another as the fulfillment of the whole law is placed in the context of preparing for the Parousia. (Rom 13: 11)

Praying for one another (Jas 5: 16). Praying for one another is a sign indicating mutual love. For it is not easy to pray for somebody you do not want to have anything to do with. It is possible to do it out of hypocrisy but in that case it would not last. Praying for one another would prevent the group members from speaking evil of one another and would pave the way for the manifestation of God's healing power among them. Jesus admonished His followers to pray even for their enemies (Matt. 5: 44), and taught that by doing this they prove themselves as genuine children of their heavenly Father (Matt5: 45).

Being subject to one another in humility (1 Pet. 5:5). Most of relational problems which arose in the church have their root in human pride. Pride makes individuals esteem themselves higher than others thus preventing them from acknowledging offenses against each other and asking for forgiveness. Unfortunately, pride always goes hand in hand with selfishness striving for supremacy. The disciples

had this serious problem among themselves. Jesus called them to emulate children and warned them that God's kingdom is for those who humble themselves as little children. The last teaching, He gave them before the Cross was a lesson of humility when he stooped down and washed their feet. He exhorted them to do so to one another (John 13: 1-17).

The church in Corinth is a typical example of what a congregation would be when these positive one another commandments which are the demonstration of brotherly love are not kept. Here is a church which seems to be the opposite of the church described in Acts chapter 2. Whereas members of the church of Acts were "with one accord" (Acts 1: 14), and "had all things in common", the congregation of Corinth was split in cliques when they came for the Lord's Supper which usually was celebrated along with the love meal called "agape." As it is pointed out, it would seem that members of these clannish parties, out of pride, ate separately refusing to fellowship with others around the same table.⁴⁸ A church in such a state becomes vulnerable to disunity and is unable to build up her members spiritually. The consequence is that those who are neglected will drop out of the church.

Living out Jesus' golden rule in Matthew 7: 12 is essential for building a community of love in the church. All are admonished to do to others whatever they would like others to do unto them. The Lord states that this is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. Matthew 7: 12 is the crowning statement of Jesus' teaching from verse 7 to 12. In chapter 6: 21 to chapter 7: 6, He presented the ideals expected from all who aspire to enter God's kingdom. Verses 7 to 12 depicts the way to live out these ideals. The Lord reveals that the way Christians treat one another is ultimately

⁴⁸ Francis D. Nichol, ed., "Own Supper [1 Cor 11: 21]," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 6:761.

the measurement of their religion.⁴⁹

Small group ministry is one of the evangelistic approaches Seventh-day Adventist Church has embraced in response to the gospel Commission in Matthew 28: 19, 20. This approach is God-directed strategy revealed to the Church through Ellen G White's ministry. In this section, small group ministry as means to create community, faith building, and training for God's service will be considered.

Small Group for Community in Ellen G. White Writings

Ellen G. White had a great concern for the unity of the church. She indicated that this unity is fundamental to the fulfillment of the Mission the Church. The first Disciples of Christ were entrusted with a world-wide task. They were to carry the gospel from Jerusalem to the end of the earth. They would not hope to fulfill this important mission unless they were bound together in Christian unity. This unity will be a testimony to the world that they were one with Christ in God the Father.⁵⁰ Heavenly agencies will be pleased to go ahead of them and open hearts for them to sow the seed of the gospel. She adds that "so long as they remained united, the church would go forth...nothing could withstand her ongoing progress."⁵¹ The small group should be team of workers united in a strong bond of union, working together in love. Its members should be a source of encouragement for one another, strengthening and assisting one another.⁵² God's expectation is that wealthy members should support the

⁴⁹ Francis D. Nichol, ed., "Therefore [Matt 7: 12]," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976-1980).

⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 90.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ellen G. White, *Welfare Ministry* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952), 107.

poor ones. Deep interest and true love should be manifested toward the needy as the demonstration of “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father”. This is a way to show appreciation to the Savior for His infinite mercy on behalf of sinners.⁵³ Church members constitute one family as she wrote: “Christians are all members of one family, all children of the same heavenly Father, with the same blessed hope of immortality.”⁵⁴

She went on and spelled out their duty as brothers and sisters: “As members of a true family care for one another, ministering to the sick, supporting the weak, teaching the ignorant, training the inexperienced, so is the household of faith to care for its needy and helpless ones.”⁵⁵ If the group members would live according to these principles, the group will be indeed an environment truly conducive to a productive discipleship. People will never think of leaving the group but to the contrary, they will be committed to doing their part for the group growth. Ellen G. White was very concerned about the lack of this true love in the Church in her time as revealed in the statement below:

The new commandment I give unto you”, Christ said, “That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” John 13: 34. What a wonderful statement; but, oh, how poorly practiced! In the church of God today brotherly love is sadly lacking. Many who profess to love the Savior do not love one another.⁵⁶

God’s intent for His children is to be a blessing for one another so that He would continue blessing them. He promised to bless those who are generous to their fellow human being for the Scripture says that “The liberal soul shall be made fat: and

⁵³ White, *Welfare Ministry*, 35.

⁵⁴ White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 550.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 550.

he that watered shall be watered also himself” (Prov 11:25). She warns against a lack of sympathy toward one another:

As a people we lose much by lack of sympathy and sociability with one another. He who talks of independence and shuts himself up to himself, is not filling the position that God designed he should. We are children of God, mutually dependent upon one another for happiness. The claims of God and of humanity are upon us. We must all act our part in this life. It is the proper cultivation of the social elements of our nature that brings us into sympathy with our brethren, and affords us happiness in our efforts to bless others.⁵⁷

Referring to the six cities of refuge in Israel, White said that the church is God’s city of refuge in a revolted world.⁵⁸ God bade the children of Israel to set apart cities of refuge where a slayer who killed somebody at unawares may flee for his life. (Num. 35: 11). In the same manner, the church at large or the small group should be a place where life is preserved, where security is guaranteed. The rest the Savior promised to all those who labor and are heavy laden should be manifested in the Church. If such an atmosphere is prevalent in small groups, they will be the best place in the world. They will attract people to Christ and retain them in His kingdom. And this is what discipleship means.

Every church member has the sacred responsibility to witness for Christ. It is his privilege to desire the second coming of the Lord but also to hasten it.⁵⁹ White presents small groups as an ideal frame for training church members for evangelism.

⁵⁷ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1881), 4: 71, 72.

⁵⁸ White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 11.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

**Small Group Ministry for Training Church
Members for Evangelism in Ellen G.
White Writings**

The organization of congregation into small communities for the purpose of ministries is a divine command for his Church.⁶⁰ For more efficient Christian witness, the following recommendation is given: “If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers.”⁶¹ Failing to abide by this recommendation is nothing less than disobedience. In Luke 6: 46, the Lord asked His hearers a question, a question He is still asking His followers today: “Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? If the church considers Jesus as her Lord, then organizing the congregation into small groups for church ministry is binding upon her.

Could it be that because the church is not doing her ministries in line with the Lord’s instructions that her effort yields so little results? The whole Mission of the church is summed up in this: making disciples for the kingdom of God. Working for the church members and for the unbelievers, that is what making disciples for Christ is all about. Working for church members includes the spiritual activities the first Christians were dedicated to. It was told of them that “they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2: 42). A significant part of the apostles’ task was training members for soul-winning. This could be testified to by the report that the Scripture gives about Philip one of the deacons and by the testimony Stephen gave to the Jews who stoned him to death.

⁶⁰ White, *Christian Service*, 72.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Paul's admonition to the Christians believers of all ages is challenging: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, with humility and fear." (1 Pet. 3: 15). This supposes an adequate training of the believers in sound Bible doctrines. Referring to the new converts whom Paul and Barnabas had trained, Ellen G. White wrote:

They had been faithfully instructed in the way of the Lord, and had been taught how to labor unselfishly, earnestly, perseveringly, for the salvation of other fellow men. This careful training of new converts was an important factor in the remarkable success that attended Paul and Barnabas as they preached the gospel in heathen lands.⁶²

Jesus did the same with the Twelve and later on with the Seventy. They were to continue their training by practicing the soul-winning lessons they have been taught. Ellen G white commenting the sending forth of these two groups said it was to train them for individual work.⁶³ In small groups, members are exposed both to theoretical and practical training and through this double training, they are being developed toward full Disciples of Christ.

In this chapter, a theological and biblical foundation for the dissertation has been laid. The concept of discipleship and small group ministry for the purpose of community, an efficient church management, service, equipping for ministry has been presented through the Old and New Testaments, and the Writings of Ellen G. White. In the next chapter, a review of literature for the study will be considered.

⁶² White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 186.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of literature on the concept of discipleship and small group ministry. It begins with the concept of discipleship in general context. This will be complemented by a look at discipleship in African context. Then the concept of small group in relation to discipleship will be explored.

The Concept of Discipleship

There is an interminable debate about the words discipleship and disciple-making today. Dann Spader advocates that discipleship is just one part of what the great commission which he understood as disciple-making. According to him, discipleship means growing up in Christ someone who has already embraced Christian faith.¹

Josh Yates is entirely of Dann's opinion and pointed out that the vocable discipleship is not found in Scriptures. While admitting that the word is used by some to indicate the "holistic process" of evangelism to Christian maturity, he said that it has come to describe the believer's spiritual growth.² Bill Hull apparently is of the same opinion. He sees disciple-making in three phases: evangelism, character development and capacity building, and sending out. Discipleship, he said, is the

¹ Dann Spader, "The Distinction Between Discipleship & Disciple-Making," *Facts and Trends*, September 11, 2014, accessed February 19, 2017, <http://factsandtrends.net/2014/09/11/the-distinction-between-discipleship-disciple-making-a-qa-with-dann-spader/#.WKyp5jWvDIU>.

² Josh Yates, "Why Discipleship Stunts Church Growth: Discipleship vs. Disciple Making," February 2, 2017, <https://www.sonlife.com/blog/discipleship-vs-disciple-making/>.

disciple's ongoing life.³

Contrary to Dann and Josh, Eric Russ seems to equate the two words. He defined discipleship as investing oneself in someone else by teaching him the Word of God, how to fellowship with other Christians, how to minister to others so that he becomes a strong believer ready to share his faith with others.⁴

As for Michael Wilkins, he defined discipleship as a tridimensional process beginning with a call. Jesus calls people and those who respond to the divine call take an engagement towards themselves, others, and the world. They commit themselves to become more and more like their Master and this is done by contemplating Him. (2 Cor 3: 18). Their commitment towards others is fulfilled by becoming servants for them (John 13: 13 – 15). They commit themselves towards the world by being actively part of the great commission (Matt 28: 19 – 20).⁵ Clinton Wahlen seems to say the same thing when he points out that discipleship implies to be and to do.⁶

It is recognized that the word discipleship which is not used in the Bible, is equivocal. It can mean the way one is living out his faith in Jesus as well as helping others to become Christian disciples.⁷ The concept is also defined as the process of adopting “the life and the ethics” of Jesus in view of the Christian blessed hope.⁸

³ Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 34–35.

⁴ Eric Russ, “The Discipleship Defined Book,” *Discipleship Defined*, accessed February 19, 2017, <http://www.discipleshipdefined.com/what-discipleship>.

⁵ Michael J. Wilkins, “Disciple,” *Discipleship*, n.d., Discipleship, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/disciple-discipleship>.

⁶ Angel Manuel Rodriguez, *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), 85.

⁷ Wilkins, “Disciple.”

⁸ Russ, “The Discipleship Defined Book.”

After having explored the concept of discipleship as understood in Christian literature, this section will consider the meaning of Christ's disciple as given by Christian writers. A line is drawn between Christian and disciple. The word Christian would indicate a believer's position as being part of the church which is God's family whereas the word disciple would refer to the process of following Christ, learning from Him. A disciple is someone who is saved by Jesus Christ, who totally accepts His lordship over his whole life, and is used by Him for the salvation of others.⁹

He is introduced into the church fellowship and has become a responsible witness for Christ to his fellow human beings.¹⁰ A disciple is therefore someone who is being saved, fellowshiping with other disciples, wholly devoted to Christ His Master by living out His teachings and ministering to others.

Peter C. Wagner defined the disciple theologically and empirically. Theologically, a disciple is what Paul called "a new creature" (2 Cor 5: 17). Through God's words and by the action of the Holy Spirit, he has been regenerated (1 Pet 1: 23). Empirically, a disciple is known by his fruits which is the evidence of his regeneration experience.¹¹

According to Wagner, another essential characteristic of Christian disciple is his commitment to the church the Body of Christ. His allegiance to Jesus can be authenticated only by his attachment to the church for which He gave His life.¹² This

⁹ James A. Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care: Helping New Members Stay on Board* (Oshawa, Ontario: Miracle, 2000), 34.

¹⁰ Ibid., 13.

¹¹ Winter and Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 576.

¹² Ibid.

allegiance to His Master makes him a continual learner¹³ who denies himself and is ready to pay the price of his discipleship.¹⁴ Referring to analogies used by Jesus, Wilkins describes the disciple as the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt 5: 13 – 14) whose life is an imitation of Christ's and as such becomes an example for others to follow.¹⁵

For Lee C. Camp, the disciple allows the Christ's lordship over all compartments of his life and gives priority to the heavenly kingdom over the earthly one.¹⁶ Hull summarizes the characteristics of a disciple in three attitudes towards Christ: learning the Word of Jesus, learning the way Jesus did ministry, and being his imitator in such a manner that other will be willing to follow Him. (1 Cor 11:1).¹⁷

Discipleship is a word that is not found in Scriptures and is defined in different way in Christian literature. Opposing discipleship to disciple-making seems to be artificial. Defining discipleship as the “ongoing life of the disciple” (Bill Hull) means that making disciples is part of discipleship because making other disciples is included in the disciple's life. It should always be remembered that the call to make disciples of all the nations as found in Matthew 28:19-20 was meant for people who were already disciples and was an extension to all disciples of all generations. It has been observed that failing to answer this call reveals two realities: either one is not a disciple or is disobedient to God.¹⁸ In this section, a review of literature on

¹³ Rodriguez, *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*, 85.

¹⁴ Ibid., 86.

¹⁵ Wilkins, “Disciple.”

¹⁶ Camp, “Mere Discipleship.”

¹⁷ Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 69.

¹⁸ Gallaty, “What Is Discipleship?”

discipleship in general have been done. A disciple is someone who accepted Christ's Lordship over his whole life and committed himself to learning from Him, through His Word, His ministry and imitating His way of life. This is what Christian discipleship is all about. The next section will be dealing with discipleship in the context of Africa

Discipleship in the African Context

This section of literature review focuses on discipleship in African context. Why is it necessary to have a section specifically dealing with African context as far as discipleship is concerned? The answer is simple and logical: God always encounters human being in their context. He entered Jews' culture in order to communicate comprehensibly with them.¹⁹ Jesus never ignored the culture of people he intended to disciple; rather, He valued and used them to make relevant the gospel to them.²⁰ The gospel message should be made relevant to people it is presented. Traditional Africans considered the supreme God inaccessible because of His incommensurable greatness.²¹

Therefore they need ancestors as mediators to help them have access to Him.²² This belief, though incorrect, constitutes as starting point to teach the biblical truth concerning Christ's sufficient mediatory work on behalf of all those who will accept Him as their Savior. This also gives an opportunity to teach believers that it is not too much God's awesome greatness that makes impossible for human beings to have

¹⁹ Winter and Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 402.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Klaus Nurnberger, *The Living Dead and the Living God* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Interpak Books, 2014), 32.

²² Ibid., 33.

access to Him, but above all, it is because of sin and that through Christ's death on the Cross, the means for communing with God was provided. Critical or appropriate contextualization is another useful way for African discipleship. "Contextualization" formerly referred to as "indigenization" is the process of the gospel culturally relevant to people. For instance, Paul used the Greek philosophical "Logos" to present Christ to his Greek audience.²³ Contextualizing the gospel message for Africans should be done in such a way that the gospel will remain "faithful to its original identity, yet transformed by its new context."²⁴ Using "Redemptive Analogies" is yet another productive strategy for discipling Africans. Jesus resorted to "redemptive analogies" to preach the gospel to Nicodemus when he told him that like people were healed from the bite of fiery serpents in the desert by looking at the serpent of brass lifted on a pole by Moses, in the same manner, everyone who believes in Him will be healed from the bite of sin. John the Baptist used imagery familiar to Jews to present Jesus to them as the Antitype of the numerous lambs they used to sacrifice for the remission of their sins.²⁵

It is recognized that the main challenge African discipleship is facing is the practice of dual allegiance of church members. It is said that most of African Christians "live in two worlds"²⁶ and any discipleship process should take it into consideration. The best way to deal with a disease is to check its roots because a disease is just the effect of a deeper cause. Studies have revealed that when Christ is

²³ Winter and Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 404.

²⁴ Rudi Maier, *Theology in The Context of Africa: Cultural and Religious Analysis* (unpublished, n.d.), 35.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 430.

²⁶ Nurnberger, *The Living Dead and the Living God*, 40.

presented in an irrelevant way, it creates a kind of “spiritual vacuum” and the natural tendency is to fill this vacuum.²⁷

Therefore, the remedy to this challenge would be that Christ should be presented not only as the solution of the sin dilemma, but also as the one who has power to protect, to heal, to grant financial prosperity.²⁸ As it has been pointed out, for an efficient African discipleship, there is a need for understanding African people’s traditional religion. Then through appropriate contextualization, using redemptive analogies they are familiar with, and presenting Christ as their Surety in the judgment as well as their Assurance for protection, healing, and financial prosperity. There is a particular area which needs a careful attention in discipling African people: Christian worship service.

Biblical worship is essentially a joyful event. Worshippers are exhorted to demonstrate their recognition of Yahweh as the true and only God by shouting for joy for the Lord and serving Him with gladness (Ps 100: 1– 3). Africans have their own way to show the joy flooding their soul. A deep study should be done in order to critically contextualize also the African worship style.

The next section aims at providing a review of literature on small group ministry as effective instrument for the process of Christian discipleship. The Concept of Small Group and Discipleship. The purpose of small groups as the purpose of the church is to make disciples for Jesus Christ.²⁹

It has been observed that “like nothing else, small groups have power to

²⁷ Nurnberger, *The Living Dead and the Living God*, 40.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁹ Administrator, “Why Should a Church Have a Small Group Ministry?,” *GotQuestions.org*, accessed October 27, 2015, <https://www.gotquestions.org/small-group-ministry.html>.

change lives. They are the ideal route to discipleship—a place where the rubber of the biblical truth meets the road of human relationship.”³⁰ For small groups to be an environment propitious for Christian discipleship, they should be pervaded with a particular atmosphere.

An environment that would help new believers build a strong faith in their Savior, have their inner needs met, have their abilities developed. Small groups constitute an efficacious frame for disciplining believers because in these groups, fellowship, mutual openness, spiritual growth through the Word of God, prayer and witnessing are easily experienced in small groups. M. Scott Boren and Don Tillman also consider small group as a frame for discipleship.³¹

Donahue B. mentioned three advantages small group setting offers as disciplining tool. First the home group setting provides more fellowship than the regular church setting. And people need fellowship. In a church situation, people may visit with each other before and after service, but barely this meets the definition of true fellowship which requires sharing, warmth, caring, and healing. Second, the informal and relaxed environment of the home provides for free and open discussion and involvement. Even those not ready to identify with our church feel comfortable in the non-threatening atmosphere of a home group. Third, the home group meetings in a very personal way care for the three areas in which people who come to worship need help: the inreach in which God reaches into people through His Word, the outreach in which people reach out to people through witness, and the upreach in which people

³⁰ Bruce Bauer and Wagner Kuhn, eds., *Biblical Principles for Missiological Issues in Africa* (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2015), 114.

³¹ Boren and Tillman, *Making Cell Groups Work: Navigation the Transformation to a Cell-Based Church*, 46.

reach up to God through prayer.³² Small groups help developing strong members. They offer opportunity to know Christ, to grow in Him, and to serve Him. Small group ministry and strong faith building

Chuck Colson argues that “no Christian can grow strong and stand the pressure of this life unless he is surrounded by a small group of people who minister to him and help him up in the faith.” Faith is foundational in our relationship with God. In Hebrew 11:6, it is said that “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV). Peter puts faith at the very foundation of spiritual growth.

All other Christian virtues are added to this first and fundamental one. He wrote:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (2 Pet. 1: 5-7, KJV).

Abraham became God’s friend for his unshakable faith in God and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness (Jas. 2: 23). Heroes and heroines spoken of in Hebrews 11 are commended for their faith. As a result of their faith in God, heathen people such as Caleb, Ruth, and Rahab became noticeable members of God’s people. The Scriptures teach that to all who believe in Jesus, God gave them the right to become children of God (John 1: 12).

In the above paragraph, the importance of faith in our relationship with God has been established. How small groups contribute to foster faith building will be

³² Boren and Tillman, *Making Cell Groups Work: Navigating the Transformation to a Cell-Based Church*, 15.

explored in the following subsection. In Rom. 10: 17, Paul declares that the Word of God is the main source of faith. “So, then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Rahab is a typical illustration of this truth. In the book of Joshua, Rahab received the two spies into her house and hid them (Jos. 2: 1–4). Before the men lay down, she went to them and confessed her faith in the God of Israel:

I know that Yahweh has given you the land, and that the fear of you is fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how Yahweh dried up the water of the Red Sea before you, when you came out of Egypt; and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites, who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and to Og, whom you utterly destroyed. As soon as we had heard it, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more spirit in any man, because of you: for Yahweh your God, he is God in heaven above, and on earth beneath. (Jos 2:8-11).

Peter teaches the same truth when he writes “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever. (1 Pet. 1: 23). He adds that not only faith comes from the Word of God, but is also strengthened by the same Word of God. “As newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2).

Bible study is always one of the components of a small group’s agenda.³³ It is said of the first disciples that “they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2: 42). Verse 46 indicates that the Church was organized in house companies. “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their food with gladness and sincerity of heart.” It is clear from the book of Acts that Bible study was the first component of these home meetings and this was meant for the participants’ faith building.

The Word of God plays another role in the life of the individuals as well as in

³³ Kurt W. Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 36.

the life of the community of believers. It has an extraordinary power to heal from emotional wounds and it heals relationships also. “Just as the truth, properly believed and used, has power to create emotional health within the individual, truth can also heal relationships. Truth heals what hurts between people as well as what hurts inside them.”³⁴ Especially this is the function of support groups. They are places where inner healing is experienced in a divine way. Support small groups are places where individuals with particular short-term needs find inner healing from life tragedies such as “divorce,” “addictions,” “or other similar needs.”³⁵

Bible study should be done in a way that is profitable for the students. The cooperative learning is the recommended method. Cooperative learning is a method of learning which creates room for those engaged in the learning process to constitute a joint learning group.³⁶ This is fundamental for the sustainability of the group. The cooperative learning is different from most instructional methods in the fact that “it is based on social interdependence theory and the related research.”³⁷ This social interdependence occurs “when individuals share common goals and each individual’s outcomes are affected by the action of the others.”³⁸ This is essential for the unity of the group.

³⁴ Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*, 73.

³⁵ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 48.

³⁶ R. Scott Tindale et al., eds., *The Social Psychological Application to Social Issues*, vol. 4 (Boston, NY: Moscow, Russia: Academic, 2002), 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4:10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:11.

Traditional African Community and Effective Small Group Ministry

The idea of community is embedded in African consciousness. In traditional African belief, “man is community. The world is community. The community is man in relationship.”³⁹ African tradition does not consider human being as independent living for himself. Rather he is always in situation of relationship and is interdependent.⁴⁰ The individual is never alone. He is part of the group and whatever happens to him happens also to the group and vice versa. Even when he gets married, he is still inseparably part of his community. He exists because others exist and it is because others exist that he also exists.⁴¹

In traditional African consciousness, the individual is a product of the corporate group. Therefore, everything happening to him also happens to the whole group and he also share in everything that happens to the group. His suffering is the group’s suffering, his joy is the group’s joy.⁴²

The group cares for the individual and conversely, the individual cares for the group. This is African ‘Ubuntu’ and is fundamental for whoever seeks to understand the African view of social life. In traditional Africa society, community is the measurement of a life worth of living. There is no life apart from the community because community confers purpose to life. Life is meaningful only if it occurs within community. Hope, peace, identity, destiny, salvation can be found only in

³⁹ Yusufu Turaki, *Foundation of African Traditional Religions and Worldview* (Nairobi, Kenya: International Bible Society Africa, 2001), 45.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ John Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Halley Court, UK: Heinemann International, 1983), 106.

⁴² Ibid.

community.⁴³

The preservation of this divine value is paramount in traditional African society. Children are taught from the inception to live out community of love. The researcher spent his childhood in a traditional African setting and has been witness of the children of many wives in polygamous marriages sharing together meals prepared by their mothers. They eat in the same bowls and all children are to eat the meal of their stepmothers. In turn, the father will take along with himself the wives and the children without distinction to his wives' farms. Mutual visitations are another means to strengthen the bonds of the community.

The researcher has still a pleasant recollection of his grandmother, at least once a week, going around visiting all her relatives. All these traditions are meant to help these children who are from different mothers remember that they are brothers and sisters.

Another traditional African value attached to African traditional community is prayer. The whole family or tribe participates in the same religious service which essentially is prayers offered in favor of all members even those who for any reason are not physically present. For a small group to be effective in Africa setting, prayer must be given an important place in its schedule. African people being “notoriously religious”⁴⁴ have always communicated with God through all kinds of prayers.

For traditional African, all places and all times are suitable for praying God. In traditional African religions, prayers are offered for deliverance from powers of

⁴³ Turaki, *Foundation of African Traditional Religions and Worldview*, 192.

⁴⁴ Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 30.

darkness, good health, material prosperity, protection from all kinds of evil.⁴⁵ The goal of this research is to design a strategy which will make small group ministry in Kegue SDA Church which is an African church, efficient for discipleship. Therefore, this strategy must imperatively take into consideration the deep spiritual aspirations of the members. The church in Togo is facing today a serious challenge which needs to be addressed. Church members are flocking to prayer centers where answers to their preoccupations such as “deliverance from powers of darkness, good health, material prosperity, and protection from all kinds of evil spirits,” are promised. Small groups should be places where special time will be devoted to prayer. For small group ministry in Kegue SDA Church to be effective, there should be a due consideration to prayer ministry during the group meetings.

Unfortunately, there are also religious beliefs which, if not properly dealt with, are threatening to the spirit of community of love that makes any small group a Christian gathering and consequently, the very life of this ministry: the fear of evil spirits.

African magic worldview is still vivacious in the conscience of many church members. Fear of witches and wizards is at the heart of African traditional Religions. It is believed that all kinds of misfortunes such as diseases, poverty, infertility and death are the results of the evil spirits.⁴⁶ It is not superfluous to provide a succinct explanation of the concept of magic especially in context of African traditional beliefs. Magic in general is attempting to influence people and events.⁴⁷ It is believed

⁴⁵ Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 64.

⁴⁶ A. O. Orubu, *African Traditional Religion, A Book of Selected Readings* (Benin City, Nigeria: Institute of Education University of Benin, 2001), 116.

⁴⁷ Turaki, *Foundation of African Traditional Religions and Worldview*, 154–155.

that some wicked people resort to this magic with view to inflict suffering.⁴⁸ This magic worldview coupled with African animistic worldview which believes that human beings are surrounded by various mystical powers produce fear and bondage in all those who are, in one way or another, influenced by them.⁴⁹ This morbid fear has come to rob many of church members of the joy to share the blessings the Lord has blessed them with through testimonies. It is admitted that testimonies is an essential element in faith building.

According to Paul, “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15: 4). Testimonies talk about God’s faithfulness in fulfilling His promises and are meant for strengthening the faith of one another. Shared testimonies create and strengthen confidence in God’s love and His power to meet our needs. Personal testimony builds and strengthens faith of both the one who gives it and those who hear it. It creates confidence in God’s power working in the life of individuals as well as of the church.⁵⁰

For fear that evil people in the church would harm them if they come to know that God has blessed them, people are more and more reluctant to share testimonies about what God blessed them. A woman confessed to the researcher while pastoring her congregation that she would no more give testimony because since she shared testimony about the academic success of her children, they were having difficulties to pass their exams.

⁴⁸ Turaki, *Foundation of African Traditional Religions and Worldview*, 154.

⁴⁹ Karl Grebe and Wilfred Fon, *African Traditional Religion and Christian Counseling*, 2nd ed. (Bamenda – Nkwen, Cameroon: Oasis International, 1997), 20.

⁵⁰ Robert Folkenberg Jr, *Health for the Harvest, Four Inspirational Steps to Total Congregation Health* (Berrien Spring, MI: Andrews University, 2002), 61.

A small group died out because the owner of the house wherein the group usually met was accused of witchcraft. So, the fear of witchcraft has become a tool the devil is using to prevent people to give glory, honor and thanks to the Lord for His wonders in their lives. The infatuation for “mountains prayer ministry” witnessed to among Pentecostal Movements today is just a cunning exploitation of these fears which are deeply embedded in African consciousness and Kegue SDA Church members do not make an exception. Two remedies could be the solution for this destructive situation for small group ministry. First, reinforcing the spirit of community of love where authentic Christian love binds the group’s members one to another.

Secondly, through Bible studies and testimonies, building members’ faith in the unsurpassable and infinite power of God which is infinitely able to protect them from satanic powers. It is important to teach church members the infinite power which is given to their Lord Jesus Christ. It is comforting for all Christians to know and always remember that the One they chose to follow has been given all power in heaven and on earth (Matt 28: 18). They should be reminded of the glorious and total victory Jesus won over all darkness powers (Col 2: 15). They should be taught the infinite power hidden in the Cross as well as in Christ’s resurrection (Heb 2: 14, 15; Phil 3: 10). God’s promises to protect those who seek refuge in Him should be constantly rehearsed (Num 23: 23; Rom 8: 31; Col. 3: 3, 4).⁵¹

These teachings will help them overcome all kinds of destructive fear making them bold to share fearlessly testimonies about the great thing the Lord has done for them. When the demon-possessed man of Gadarenes after his healing asked the Lord

⁵¹ Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective*, Revised. (Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational, 2005), 51–52.

to allow him to stay with Him, Jesus answered him saying: “Go to your house, to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how he had mercy on you.” (Mark 5: 19). It is God’s will for His children to proclaim to others His marvelous interventions on their behalf.

Small Group Ministry in Contemporary Literature

Small Group Ministry and the Community of Love

The New Testament is full of exhortations to Christians to love one another (John 13: 34,35; 15: 12, 17; Rom 13: 8; Eph 4: 2; 1 Pet 1: 22; 4: 8; 1 John 3: 11, 23; 4: 7, 11, 12; 2 John 1: 5). This command to love one another is the foundation for all the other “one another” in the Bible. It embraces inter-relationships, mutual edification and mutual service.

It is a divine appeal to His people to show to one another love which is ever ready to sacrifice its own interests for the interests of others. This love is always ready to give, to share, and to comfort.⁵² This is God’s intent for His Church. “Just as Jesus came as Emmanuel (God with us; Matt. 1: 23), so the new family is called to be with Jesus and with one another.”

For Jesus, small group means community. Christian community is the objective for which Christ labored and pray. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, [art] in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17: 20 – 21). Commenting on Jesus’ strategy of working with small groups of persons, Russell observes:

At the heart of Jesus’ small group ministry, is the idea of community. The

⁵² Bauer and Kuhn, *Biblical Principles for Missiological Issues in Africa*, 102.

small group does not exist for the sake of a small group. It is merely the vehicle for establishment of community. Jesus recognized that small group is the best means for the accomplishment of that goal. Through his ministry Jesus was concerned that community be developed among His followers. This seems to be one of the most important tasks that Jesus attempted to accomplish.⁵³

This community goes far beyond a mere gathering: one can be part of a gathering and yet experience solitude. A community is a structure where nobody stands alone. There is a common sense of belonging and sharing. Community is what the Church is meant to be, one body with many members united and depending one upon another. True community goes beyond gathering together. Studying together or praying together do not necessarily make a community. Community means trusting in one another and sharing the same space is not sufficient to make it happen. Being together is the beginning of community but is not community.

Small groups are the best frames for developing such a community. Small group structure helps weaving the bounds of brotherly love, allowing its members to know one another. These Christian virtues can hardly occur apart from this structure.⁵⁴ Small group is characterized by honest communication, a deep relationship, and a significant commitment to “rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other, to make others’ conditions our own.”⁵⁵

This is what community of love is all about. Community of love is lived out in small groups. The small number makes it possible to know one another, to care for one another. The Church should be pervaded by such a “life-giving community”

⁵³ Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life & Mission of the Local Church*, 103, 104.

⁵⁴ Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*, 62.

⁵⁵ Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here? A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church* (Houston, TX: Touch, 2000), 113.

atmosphere which is the essential characteristic of a Christian small group. This spirit of community “empowers” the Church and “impacts the world.”⁵⁶ People in the church need to feel belonging and according to Kurt, Christian small groups are the best frame to cultivate this innate sense which is characteristic of human nature. He states:

Belonging is simply a close-knit group of friends that doesn't feel complete if someone in the group is missing. Keeping our terminology simple, that is what small group is all about. A small group is a group of people who truly become friends – friend who are there for each another whether they are sad, happy, discouraged, celebrating, or mourning. Friends who pray with you, challenge you, hold you accountable, laugh with you, and love you no matter what you do or where your past has taken you. Together, by God's grace and power, they live out the phrase ‘we want to see Jesus (John 12: 21) in the way we treat each other.’⁵⁷

True evangelism is meant for bringing people into the church community where everybody feels at home. God is looking forward to seeing his people to be with one accord loving one another. Evangelism is not completed until people who are won for Christ are brought into such a community. As they are in fellowship with the Father and the Son, so they are to be in fellowship with one another for that is what the church exists for.⁵⁸ Christian religion is a religion of community and fellowship. To be Christian is to be in fellowship with Christ and also with fellow Christians. One cannot be a Christian and be an islander.⁵⁹

Christian fellowship occurs when life is experienced together. It is showing to one another “unselfish love, honest sharing, practical serving, sacrificial giving, and

⁵⁶ Bauer and Kuhn, *Biblical Principles for Missiological Issues in Africa*, 115.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 19.

⁵⁸ Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life & Mission of the Local Church*, 119.

⁵⁹ Russell C. Burrill, *The Revolutionized Church Of The 21st Century: The Explosion Power of a Church Built on Relationships* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1997), 83.

sympathetic comforting.”⁶⁰ Courtesy, confidentiality, frequent and regular contact with the group, humility, are indispensable for cultivating community.⁶¹ Community supposes that members of the group share their life and work together toward developing common goals and common commitment.⁶²

Community is fundamental for effective small group ministry as a means for discipleship. Small groups are propitious for people to connect one with another. They are places “where they are disciplined.”⁶³ Community is foundational to the Christian Church. It started with community. This community was essentially characterized by “one mind”, “one heart”, “and togetherness.”⁶⁴ Small group is the ideal frame to care for one another.⁶⁵

Traditional African societies share with the Bible the divine-inspired value of community of love which, as it has been observed, is fundamental for effective small group ministry. In the next section, community of love will be considered from traditional African point of view.

Small Group Ministry and Numerical Growth

One of the distinctive characteristics of a disciple is that he continues the work of his Master after him. Sharing one’s faith is foundational to discipleship. George E. Knowles summed up this truth when he wrote: “Soul winning is a spiritual exercise

⁶⁰ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 138.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 148–150.

⁶² Neighbour, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here?*, 113.

⁶³ Boren and Tillman, *Making Cell Groups Work: Navigating the Transformation to a Cell-Based Church*, 46.

⁶⁴ Ayodele, *Christianity in Remoland 1892 – 2012*, 261.

⁶⁵ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 23.

that maintains spiritual health. The first love experience is retained by leading others to a similar experience with God.”⁶⁶ It is God’s intention to bless His followers through service to Him. Their involvement in His service opens for Him ways to bless them.⁶⁷

The priesthood of all believers is foundational to God’s covenant with His people both in the Old Testament and in the New Covenant (Exod 19: 3 – 6; 1 Pet 2: 9 NKJV). Lay people involvement in gospel ministry is therefore at the heart of Christian discipleship. Paul indicates that the goal of equipping church members is to enable them for the ministry (Eph 4: 12 NKJV).

Experience has shown that small group is one of the best frames for church members’ mobilization and involvement in witnessing for Christ. In this regard, Burrill believes that “Caring communities where people truly minister to one another are the basis upon which all real Mission can happen in Adventist Churches at the beginning of the new millennium.”⁶⁸ “Every believer, a priest” is God’s intent for His Church. The whole army of laypeople should be empowered so that they would use their spiritual gifts to advance the kingdom of God. Small groups in homes, working places constitute “key way” to make this happens.⁶⁹ It is Kurt’s conviction that the time has come for the Church to begin using small groups as church-planting

⁶⁶ George E. Knowles, *How to Help Your Church Grow* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1997), 71.

⁶⁷ Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches and Those Desiring Renewal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 144.

⁶⁸ Burrill, *The Revolutionized Church Of The 21st Century: The Explosion Power of a Church Built on Relationships*, 17.

⁶⁹ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 97.

strategy.⁷⁰

One aspect of this mobilization of lay people for outreach ministry is to teach them how they can use their God-given abilities to share the gospel with their relatives. “The greatest help that can be given to our people is to teach them to work for God, and depend on Him, not on ministers.”⁷¹

Small groups are needed for developing spiritual gifts, for mobilizing and training lay persons for the Mission.⁷² Miguel Angel, by experience advocates that small groups offer such opportunity for training church members for witnessing as he states: “The most effective way to teach people how to reach people is through small group ministry in individual homes.”⁷³

Every small group is indeed a potential church because every organized church has begun sometime and somewhere as a small group. A small group as a community of love where members care for one another in a loving relationship is by nature an evangelistic center as Burrill points it out: “Non-Christian seeing people who are living in a restored community, truly caring for each other will flock to be part of it. Such loving, caring communities are a drawing card for evangelism.”⁷⁴ Kurt told the exciting experience of one of his friends which illustrates this truth. He wrote:

A friend of mine visited a small group. Members were studying Bible prophecy and had Christians and seekers (people who haven't accepted Jesus) attending. During the meeting it was obvious that Martha, one of the non-

⁷⁰ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 50.

⁷¹ Johnson, *Small Groups for the End Time*, 26.

⁷² Bauer and Kuhn, *Biblical Principles for Missiological Issues in Africa*, 113.

⁷³ Miguel Angel Cerna, “How I Use Small Groups in Evangelism,” n.d., accessed October 27, 2015, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1987/10/how-i-use-small-groups-in-evangelism>.

⁷⁴ Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life & Mission of the Local Church*, 120.

Christians, did not understand the Bible study. At the end of the meeting my friend was talking with Martha. She told him that she was going to become a Christian and join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was curious because he knew she did not understand the prophecy of Daniel 9 that the group has just studied. My friend questioned Martha about her understanding of the teaching of the Adventist Church. She responded, “There are some things I don’t understand. But those that I do understand I know are true. Once I continue to study and understand that which is not clear to me, I know I will find it biblical, because everything I have understood so far is rooted in Scripture. Besides, these people love me; they are my family.”⁷⁵

Small groups are the best environment for sowing the seed of the gospel.

When this is done, public campaigns become reaping evangelism. Those who were involved in these small groups respond more favorably to the call of the Holy Spirit and give their lives to the Lord. Speaking of such people, Christian Schwarz wrote: “At the moment they are exposed to the message of the gospel, it makes immediately sense to them because they have already experienced the power of the gospel through the prayer and the care of the Christian community.”⁷⁶

Small groups constitute a fruitful environment for friendship evangelism and it is well known that this type of evangelism was the Lord’s approach to evangelism, the only one which gives success as Ellen G. White said: “Christ’ method alone will give true success in reaching people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desires their good. He shows His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, follow Me.”⁷⁷

Underlying the great value of friendship evangelism, Tom Stebbins advised that “before we can win people to Jesus, we must win them to ourselves. Sharing the gospel is a very personal matter. We are probing the most intimate, private areas of

⁷⁵ Johnson, *Small Groups for the End Time*, 58, 59.

⁷⁶ Christian A. Schwarz, *Color Your World with Natural Church Development Experiencing All God Has Designed You to Be* (St Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2005), 18–19.

⁷⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 144.

the other person's life so we must first earn that person's trust and build some measure of friendship."⁷⁸

Church members should be birthed into the church in such a way that witnessing for Christ will become part of their new identity. They must be taught that being Christ's disciple includes being passionate for soul winning. Witnessing should be their way of life.⁷⁹ Small groups are places where church members should be empowered by the Holy Spirit to become God's agents for reaching out to other people for restoration and redemption.⁸⁰ God intends to bless His children in many ways and He chooses to do it through their voluntary involvement in His service.⁸¹

From what precedes, it is strongly established that small groups provide a propitious environment for evangelism. One of the benefits that result from evangelism is the numerical growth of the community. Pastor Miguel Angel Cerner's personal testimony is illustrative with regard to church numerical growth. In the 40-year-old Van Nuys Spanish church in southern California, he testifies, we saw 350 new members baptized in just two years of small group ministry.

In 1986 the same church had 140 baptisms as a result of their small group ministry.⁸² Small groups are not only instrument for the quantitative growth of the church but also for its qualitative growth as well.

⁷⁸ Tom Stebbins, *Friendship Evangelism by the Book: Applying First Century Principles to Twenty-First Century Relationships* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1995), 64.

⁷⁹ Johnson, *Small Groups for the End Time*, 18.

⁸⁰ Bauer and Kuhn, *Biblical Principles for Missiological Issues in Africa*, 113.

⁸¹ Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century*, 144.

⁸² Cerna, "How I Use Small Groups in Evangelism."

Small Group Ministry and Spiritual Growth

In his letter to the Christians in Ephesus, Paul said that the goal of the function-spiritual gifts is to help church members grow spiritually (Eph 4: 11–15 NKJV). Small groups are not only places where church membership increases. They are also a frame for members' individual spiritual growth. Small groups are meant for spiritual growth and “a group that by design, does not contribute to this goal of spiritual maturity may be well a collection of Christians, but is not a successful group.”⁸³

Personal involvement in soul winning activities is one the ways provided by the Lord for spiritual growth. It is “a spiritual exercise that maintains spiritual health. The first love experience is retained by leading others to a similar experience with God.” Bible study, prayer, and fellowship are other ingredients of a Christian small group gathering. All these are powerful instrument for the group members' spiritual growth.

Souls who have been won for Christ have been won to populate Heaven and not just to be reported on church records. Once their names are written in the books of heaven, the Lord expects these names to remain. Small group ministry can also help retain new members.

Small Group Ministry and Member Retention

Jesus gave account of His stewardship in relation with those the father gave Him. He declared that none of them was lost except the son of perdition (John 17: 12).

Cress warns:

To do less than we can to preserve those whom the Lord has given us, would be more than a tragedy for the church. It would be disobedience to Christ's

⁸³ Bill P. Donahue and Willow Creek Resources, *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 24.

command to fish for the humanity. This preservation process is the church's work of conservation.⁸⁴

The work of soul winning is not complete until the souls won are fully integrated into the fellowship of the congregation. The same passion that is shown for soul winning should be seen for soul keeping. Soul winning and soul preservation are equally important in discipling process.”⁸⁵ Small groups constitute also a tool for members' retention as Burrill advocates:

Ideally, the small group is also the perfect place to bring new people. In my experience, I have discovered that we rarely lose a person who joins a small group. Why? Because the relational bridges have been built. Most assimilation of new members has been doctrinal, though few people leave because of doctrine. The reason for the loss of members is relational. Small groups, relational groups could be a big help to us in stemming the tide of apostasy. Even before people join the church, they should be involved in a small group, so that relational ties are built from the very beginning.⁸⁶

It is said that “there is no place like home” The church as a community where people feel loved, accepted, and valued will be a home for them. They would stay on board.

The church needs reliable leaders. It has been so from its beginning. Jesus provide reliable leaders for the church from its inception. Small group ministry provides an excellent frame for training future leaders who will take over when the need arises.

⁸⁴ Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care*, 43.

⁸⁵ Roger Dudley and Des Cumming, Jr, *Adventure in Church Growth in You Can Keep Them If You Care*, n.d., 22.

⁸⁶ Bauer and Kuhn, *Biblical Principles for Missiological Issues in Africa*, 112.

Small Group Ministry and Building Church Leaders

Donahue and Robinson observe that “the church is hope of the world, and its future rests in the hands of its leaders.”⁸⁷ The success or the failure of any organization falls on its leadership. This is seen throughout the Scripture, especially in Israel’s history. Burrill believe that “The leaders of these small groups are actually lay pastors who assist the pastor in the care of the flock.”⁸⁸

As such they play a crucial role in the life of the groups and through the groups in the church as a whole. A careful attention should be devoted to them with regard to their recruitment, their training, and their coaching because the effectiveness of the groups, to some extent, depends on their leaders. Training is paramount in building small group leaders. Its objective is “helping someone acquire a skill”.⁸⁹

Bill and Russ identified three forms of training small group leaders: Classroom training which is content-driven, apprentice training which is relationally driven, and the On-the-job training which is more practical training. Whatever forms the training may take, to be successful, it should have these four components: teaching, demonstrating, practicing, and evaluating.⁹⁰

Coaching is another essential part of a small group leader’s training. The coach sees possibility where other see impossibility, invest himself in the one he is coaching. He explores helps realize the existing potential and help get the best out of

⁸⁷ Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*, 123.

⁸⁸ Bauer and Kuhn, *Biblical Principles for Missiological Issues in Africa*, 111.

⁸⁹ Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*, 135.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

it. He shows how the job should be done and the benefit to get when it done in the right way.⁹¹ Coaches are expected to give support to the small group leaders' ministry through caring, equipping, and praying. Bill and Russ say that "coaches remember that every leader is a person; they provide care for leaders by showing love for who they are not simply for what they do.

Coaches support each leader's ministry by connecting them to necessary resources, such as curriculum, training, or prayer support."⁹² From what precedes, it is clear that training group leaders is not to be overlooked if the congregation will have an effective small group ministry. It should be remembered that the training curriculum is as important as the training itself.

Training curriculum for training small group leaders. There are some key topics which should never be missing in a good training program meant for small group leaders.

1. Biblical foundation for small groups
2. The importance of the first meeting
3. Leading out in the three part of the small group agenda – sharing time, Bible study time, and prayer time
4. Job descriptions of the small-group leader, assistant leader, and host/hostess
5. Mobilizing for personal witnessing
6. Strategy for obtaining decisions for Christ
7. Handling conflicts when they arise
8. The importance of personal spirituality.⁹³

⁹¹ Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*, 145.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 146.

⁹³ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 138 139.

The role of the leader, his assistant, and the host of small group meetings is of a great importance for the group to be efficient. These are the key persons for the success of this ministry.

Small groups and its three key persons. The group leader, the assistant leader, and the host/hostess play a vital role in the effectiveness of small group ministry in the church. Therefore, it not superfluous to cursively mention what is expected from them at this point. First the group leader.

1. He facilitates the weekly group meeting.
2. He oversees all the details of the group life in and outside of the weekly meeting.
3. He models and encourages participation, sharing, acceptance, and understanding among the members.
4. He guides the group in developing a group agreement (or covenant), goals, and in carrying out the goals that are set.
5. He checks on the members who are absent in order to encourage them, to meet their needs, and to be aware of any difficulties in their lives.
6. He talks and prays weekly about the group with the assistant leader and with the host/hostess.
7. He seeks assistance as needed to ensure a positive group life
8. He attends a regular scheduled leaders' meetings.⁹⁴

Second, the Assistant leader

1. He supports and encourages the leader through prayer and other means.
2. He facilitates the group meeting when the leader is absent.
3. He assists in recruiting new members and following up absent members.
4. He assists with details such as child care arrangement, completing and turning in required report forms, and other details as needed.

⁹⁴ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 121.

5. He attends regularly scheduled leaders' meetings
6. He is an apprentice in training to lead a group of their own in the future.⁹⁵

And third, he Host/Hostess

1. He provides a comfortable home or location for the meeting.
2. He arranges sitting in the meeting room.
3. He answers the door and welcomes the members as they arrive.
4. He makes sure the members' needs, such as a place to relieve oneself, water to drink, are met.
5. He takes care of any distractions that may occur during the group meeting.⁹⁶

It is important to note that all these useful suggestions should be wisely contextualized taking into consideration African customs and social norms when necessary. For small group ministry to succeed, the church pastor's involvement is necessary. Africans, normally, have a respect for spiritual leaders and consider him as God's representative among his people.

Small Groups and the Role of the Church Pastor

Church pastor is the first Responsible of the life of the congregation and such, plays a vital role in the success a small group ministry. It is recognized that "the pastor's leadership and support in the process of organizing small groups and their ongoing functions is the difference between success and mediocrity. Although it is true that small-group leadership and participation is the responsibility of the church members, the involvement of the pastor is vitally necessary."⁹⁷ Here are some

⁹⁵ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 121.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 122.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 86.

recommendations for pastoral role in small group ministry effectiveness

1. The pastor should publicly share with the church members his personal convictions concerning the importance of small groups
2. He should preach a sermon or a series of sermons on the biblical basis and necessity for small-group meetings.
3. He should provide time in church on Sabbath for the members of small groups to share their experiences. This will inspire others to become involved.
4. He should regularly meet the small group leaders. In these meetings, he should pray with and for the group members, answer the questions they may have, allow the leaders to share their positive and negative experiences, provide background information and helpful suggestions regarding the study guide if all the groups are using the same material, and provide resource suggestions.
5. He should be attentive to the spiritual growth the members attending the groups.
6. He should provide training on visitation and follow-up, making decision, and other necessary soul-winning skills.
7. He should provide ongoing training and mentoring of small group leaders.⁹⁸

In African context, the role of the church pastor is highly important for the success of any spiritual program especially the small group ministry. In Africa traditional, worldview, the priest is regarded as someone who assumes officially the function of a Mediator between human beings and divinities. He is considered to be an “official servant of a divinity, a kind of vicar of a divinity.”⁹⁹ This is the reason why in pagan Rome it was easy to believe that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ. This also explains in part the success of Catholicism in traditional African societies. Therefore, the church pastor’s involvement in small groups’ programs is essential to their success. Small group ministry, in African context especially, needs church pastors to be functional.

⁹⁸ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 86, 87.

⁹⁹ J. O. Ojo, *Introduction to West African Traditional Religion* (Unpublished material, n.d.), 59.

An Ewe adage¹⁰⁰ says that when you put two calabashes on the surface of water, they surely at a given time meet. So the possibility for conflict to arise in Christian small groups is not to be discarded.

Small Group and Healthy Conflict Management

Conflict is not negative in and of itself. Conflict could be either negative or positive. Therefore, conflict is not the problem. The problem lies with the ways we deal with it when it springs up. Because conflicts threaten relationship and hamper the accomplishment of the goals of the group, they must be positively managed. Conflict management is defined as: “the process of influencing the activities and attitudes of an individual or group in the midst of disagreement, tension, and behavioral actions which are threatening the relationship and or the accomplishing of goals.”¹⁰¹ Here is four-step conflict resolution which could be useful for a small group.

1. The group must recognize the problem
2. The group must own and personalize the problem
3. The problem must be discussed and clarified
4. The group must be committed to solving the problem¹⁰²

Managing positively a conflict means that the conflict is managed in such a way that the result is what is called “conflict transformation.” It means that in the process of solving the conflict, “the parties to the conflict work through it in such a constructive manner that significant learning and development occur in the lives of

¹⁰⁰Ewe is one the dominant ethnic groups making up Togolese population

¹⁰¹ Kenneth O. Gangel and Samuel A. Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management in Churches and Christian Organizations* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 134.

¹⁰² Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 83.

the individuals involved as well as in the church as a whole.”¹⁰³

Conflict arises “when my thrust as a person – my hope, my dreams, wants, needs, drives – runs counter to your thrust.” Conflict transformation occurs by “caring, confronting, and integrating your needs and wants with my needs and wants in our joint effort toward creating Christian community.”¹⁰⁴ This will help the group heal wounded relationship and allow it to growth through conflicts. Another element for an efficient small group ministry is vision. Vision is essential to the life of any small group. It plays a vital role in the sustainability of the group.

Small Groups and the Importance of Vision

The need of vision is evident for any group that wants to last. A clear direction should be defined. This will help the group members know whether or not they are fulfilling their purpose.”¹⁰⁵ Applied to a small group, “a vision is *a* statement of the functional purpose of your small group.”¹⁰⁶ It helps know whether the group is making progress or not. There are fundamentally three reasons that explain the value of a vision for a small group:

1. Vision breeds commitment and investment.
2. Vision makes decision-making more objective.
3. Vision mobilizes your people inside and outside of your meetings.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Kale David W, *Managing Conflict in the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2003), 15.

¹⁰⁴ Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*, 89.

¹⁰⁵ Marshall Segal, “Every Small Group Needs a Vision,” *Desiring God*, last modified February 26, 2015, accessed October 27, 2015, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/every-small-group-needs-a-vision>.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Marshall Segal, “Every Small Group Needs a Vision,” *Desiring God*, last modified

A small group without a vision is like a ship without a rudder. Tightly linked to vision is the group covenant. Covenant plays a non-negligible role in achieving the group's vision. Covenant binds the group members together and helps them achieve their vision.

Small Groups and Group Covenant

A covenant is a set of basic rules agreed upon which guide the functioning of the group. These are, for example the group members' expectations, accountability to one another, commitment to the group, a basis by which to evaluate your group's success, the purpose of the group. Here is a proposed group covenant.¹⁰⁸

It will include for example: the name of the group, the type of the group, its purpose, the place, the day, and the time of meeting, of meeting, the name of the leader, the assistant leader, the host, and their contacts, the number of the group member. This will indicate when the group needs to split. There are several types of small groups. These groups are classified into two or three categories according to those who researched in small group ministry.

Types of small groups. Kurt identifies seven types of small groups:

fellowship group, a Bible study group, an outreach group which is committed not only to win new souls but also to seek for members who are no more attending the church. There are also support groups, prayer groups, house churches, and Mission groups.¹⁰⁹ These types of groups are classified into two categories: Mary groups and Martha

February 26, 2015, accessed October 27, 2015, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/every-small-group-needs-a-vision>.

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, *Small Groups for the End Time*, 93.

¹⁰⁹ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 47 – 51.

groups in relation to the story of the two sisters in Luke 10.¹¹⁰

Table 1. Types of Small Groups

Mary Groups	Martha Groups
Fellowship groups	Some Outreach groups
Bible study groups	House church
Outreach groups	Sabbath school action units
Prayer groups	Mission groups
Support groups	
Covenant Groups	

Here is another three-ways categorization of small groups.¹¹¹

Table 2. Alternative Categorization of Small Groups

Task groups	Fellowship groups	Bible study
Outreach	Fellowship	Bible study
Support	Covenant	Sabbath school action unit
Sabbath school action units	Prayer	
House church		
Mission group		

Bill and Russ categorized the different types of small groups into two groups but call them differently: Truth-focused group and Life-focused groups. Truth-focused groups that put emphasis on Bible study with the end result of getting “the right answer.” On the other side, life-focused groups put emphasis on “sharing stories of pain, need, and God’s work in their lives.”¹¹²

If small groups will be effective, there should be a system which allows a

¹¹⁰ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 51.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹¹² Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*, 74, 75.

continual evaluation. In the next section, the value of evaluation for the success of small group ministry will be considered.

Small Group Ministry and Evaluation

Evaluation is important for small group ministry effectiveness because it gives the group members the opportunity to think back about their activities and other things related to the life of the group and their meetings. It allows the group to discover its strengths and its weaknesses and to take the right decisions to correct what needs to be corrected. This should be done periodically. After every meeting, a brief evaluation should be conducted. The leader should encourage all group members to be involved. It not only helps the group be focused on its purpose by redirecting what is going wrong, but also reinforces the group cohesion.¹¹³

There are some practical ways which are suggested to encourage reflection among the group. At the end of every meeting, group members compare what has been accomplished to their agreed objectives. All members should be encouraged to give his opinion regarding how close they have been to the Mission, what was missing and then make suggestions for improvement.¹¹⁴

The review of literature which is the object of this chapter provided some important hints which are basic for healthy small groups. In closing this chapter, some specific negative factors and suggested solutions for effective small group ministry will be considered.

¹¹³ Manuel London and Marilyn London, *First-Time Leaders of Small Groups: How to Create High Performing Committees, Task Forces, Clubs and Boards* (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass, 2007), 220.

¹¹⁴ Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*, 220–221.

Some Negative Factors and Suggested Solutions for Effective Small Group Ministry

Negative Factors

Some negative factors to small groups' effectiveness have been identified and suggested solutions provided. The first negative factor is a wrong launching strategy. It should be always remembered that the strategy of launching a small group ministry in the church is a determinant step in its success. A wrong launching strategy leads inevitably to a failure. The better way to launch a small group ministry in a church is to begin with a small number of groups and increase this number as time passes by. The mistake is that before the launching ceremony, small groups were already formed with a very minimal training for group's leaders.

The second one is the combination of the pastor-dependent system wherewith church members are accustomed today and issues linked to the church structure. According to the Bible, the key role of the pastor is to equip lay people for the ministry. Lay people involvement in gospel ministry is therefore at the heart of Christian discipleship. The numerical and spiritual growth of the church depends on the gift-based ministry of the laity. Carl George, a church growth consultant wrote: a pastor-centered large church is damageable to the staff and at the end weakens the congregation. Such a church does not grow neither spiritually nor in number. On the contrary, a lay-empowered congregation will not stop growing because the staff is always taking good care of the members who, in their turn, are engaged in working for God.”¹¹⁵

The third negative factor is the program-based model wherein small groups constitute an option among many instead of small group model wherein all church

¹¹⁵ Burrill, *The Revolutionized Church Of The 21st Century: The Explosion Power of a Church Built on Relationships*, 17.

members belong to a small group. The fourth one is that with our modern lifestyle, many church members hardly find time to be part of a small group. People are so busy about meeting their physical needs that they forget their spiritual needs. In this time-consuming society, people are becoming more and more “Martha” and less and less “Mary”. The solution will be that pastors should help members reflect seriously on their ways of life, see the threat this materialism represents for their faith and take appropriate measures to avail themselves for small group meetings.”¹¹⁶

The fifth one is the lack of “a discipleship/mentor experience” both for new Christians, including current members.¹¹⁷ As solution, it is suggested that church leadership should help members develop a life-changing habit of prayer, and Bible study, train them for witnessing, and keep mentoring them through their spiritual journey.”¹¹⁸

The sixth negative factor is the failure to establish a “praying church.” Prayer is an essential element in the success of small group ministry. The following experience could be helpful. A pastor came up with a simple idea consisting in a three-step strategy for members who are willing to reach out to their neighbors.

1. Each member was to accept a group of 10 to 20 homes in their neighborhood as a personal Mission field.
2. During the members’ daily worship, when they drove or walk by those designated homes, they were to pray for the families that live there – that God would meet their needs, and that they would accept Jesus into their lives.
3. If the member chooses to become further involved (and this was optional), there were suggestions and help for becoming friends with these families through personal contact, with the eventual goal of inviting them to be part of a personal or

¹¹⁶ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 153.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

small group Bible study.¹¹⁹

Solutions

In the book *Small Groups for the End-time*, six tips for success in small group ministry are presented which everybody who is committed to begin a small group ministry should keep in mind.

1. The meetings should be held in a relaxed atmosphere. People should be made comfortable and feel like at home. The atmosphere should tell them that they are needed and that they are always welcome to the meeting. Anything that is susceptible to embarrass should be strictly avoided. For example, making everybody in the circle talking or answering questions, reading or praying around the circle. Nobody should feel pushed to do anything.
2. The group should have a covenant to guide them. A covenant is a set of rules a group agrees on as operating guide. It should be discussed together during, at least, the two first meetings. This will help the group members own the details of the group life. All the do's and all the don'ts should be discussed and agreed on.
3. There should have regular leaders' meetings. The three key persons of the small group namely, the leader, the assistant leader, and the host needs support and continual training. The presence of the pastor at this meeting is very important. He would not be there all the time, but at least, once a month. Three items will furnish this meeting agenda.
 - a. Vision casting done by the pastor
 - b. Sharing time during which there will be interaction between the leaders and the pastor. The leaders' concerns are taken care of by the pastor whose presence constitutes a comfort and an encouragement for them.
 - c. Skill training for a continual equipping of these leaders. The pastor should always prepare a relevant topic to share with them.
4. Securing the commitment of the pastor for small group ministry. He should be participating in leaders' meetings and be involved in one small group. This will be a great stimulus for the church members to be involved.
5. Making small groups a priority over program. This means that church activities will be planned in such a way that small groups will have enough room to function.
6. Focusing on outreach. Any small group which is not outreach-focused soon or later will die away. Experiencing new people joining the small group will keep it

¹¹⁹ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 154.

vibrant and healthy.

John Mallison suggested also some useful keys for an effective small group ministry which are: determining the size of the group, making all Bible studies relevant, providing opportunities for worship and the Lord Supper, keeping mutual touch between two meetings, regular evaluation, loyalty to the local church, making plan for leisure events, and depending on God.¹²⁰

This review of literature covered the concept of discipleship in general context and particularly in African context. Then the concept of small groups in relation to discipleship was analyzed. In this regard, small group ministry is seen as factor of strengthening Christian faith, building community of love, evangelism, numerical and spiritual growth of the church, member retention, building church leaders. Finally, factors for effective small groups have been explored.

Chapter 2 laid a biblical and theological foundation for this research. In chapter 3, a review of literature has been done. It aims at showing what people who have written on the topic so far have said about it. It is evident that all the books that have been written on small group ministry have not been explored in this review of literature. Nevertheless, this chapter gives enough indications which along with the biblical truths on small group ministry will inform the questionnaire that is needed for surveying Kegue Church where this research is being carried out.

¹²⁰ Mallison, *Small Group Leader: A Manual to Develop Vital Small Groups* 11, 26–43.

CHAPTER 4
A STRATEGY FOR EFFECTIVE SMALL
GROUP MINISTRY

Background

This section will look at the macro and the micro contexts of the program. In the macro context, a brief presentation of Tog will be done. Furthermore, the climate, the demography, the economy, the culture and the religions will be examined. The micro context will describe the location, the history of Kegue SDA Church, and the current state of small group ministry.

In chapters 2 and 3, we have considered successively, the theological foundation and the review of literature on small group ministry. This has led to designing a questionnaire for surveying Kegue Church in order to discover its perceptions on this ministry.

In this chapter, the macro and micro contexts of the program, the field research methodology including the type of research, the research instrument, the research population, the technique for sampling and the sample size, the data collection procedure, the data analysis technique used to analyze the collected data will be discussed. The description of the participants, the description of the variables, will be also considered. All this will lead to designing a strategy for an effective small group susceptible to foster discipleship in Kegue SDA Church. The chapter will end with a brief summary. This section discusses the macro context of the project which is Togo in order to have an insightful understanding of the entire work.

The Macro Context

Togo is a one of the smallest countries in West Africa. It is sandwiched by its geography as well as by its history between Ghana Republic on the West and Benin Republic on the East. Its southern and northern borders are respectively the gulf of Guinea and the republic of Burkina Faso. Togo has 56 kilometers of coastline and stretches 156 kilometers north from the coast. The country covers an area of 56.785 kilometers square ¹ and is divided into five administrative regions.

These administrative units are in turn divided into thirty smaller administrative units named Prefectures.² The official language is French and serves as means of communication in the Administration, commercial transactions as well as of education. Besides French, two national languages, Ewe and Kabiye are also promoted.³ The capital city Lomé is a border town with the Republic of Ghana.

Climate

Togo has a tropical climate because it is just eight degrees north the equator.⁴ There are two raining seasons in the Southern part of the country. The big one covers April to early August while the second one significantly shorter than the first one occurs from October to November.⁵ The northern part of the country presents a

¹ Administrator, "Geography of Togo," *Wikipedia*, accessed June 28, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Togo.

² Administrator, "Economy of Togo," *Wikipedia*, n.d., accessed June 28, 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Togo&oldid=805028311>.

³ Administrator, "Culture of Togo," *Wikipedia*, n.d., accessed June 30, 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Togo#Culture>.

⁴ Administrator, "Nations Encyclopedia," *Wikipedia*, accessed June 28, 2016, <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/geography/Slovenia-to-Zimbabwe-Cumulative-Index/Togo.html#ixzz4CttrsCvf>.

⁵ Ibid.

landscape with a dry tropical climate.⁶

Demography

The demography of Togo has speedily grown from 1981. The census taken by then gave a total number of 2,719, 567 inhabitants. In November 2010, the population has increased from this number to 6,191,155. With this population, Togo ranks among the less populated countries in the world. 65% of the population are living in rural area and are involved in agriculture or pastures. Lomé the capital city with its suburban area has 1,477, 660 residents.⁷

Economy

Togo is essentially an agro pastoral country with a subsistence agriculture (yams, cassava, corn, beans, rice, millet and sorghum) and cash crop agriculture (cocoa, coffee, and cotton). These cash crops, mainly cotton represent 40% of export revenues of the country. Togo is counted among big countries that produce Phosphate, and the sea port plays also an important role in the economy of the country.⁸

Culture and Religions

Togo culture reflects the multiplicity of the ethnic groups that make up the country demography. There are about 40 ethnic groups in Togo.⁹ Despite the growing influence of Christian and Muslim religions, the majority of Togolese population believe in African Traditional Religion. Almost half, 51%, of the total population in

⁶ Administrator, "Economy of Togo."

⁷ Administrator, "Culture of Togo."

⁸ Administrator, "Togo Economy 2017, CIA World Factbook," *Countries of The World*, accessed June 28, 2016, https://theodora.com/wfbcurent/togo/togo_economy.html.

⁹ Administrator, "Religions of Togo," *Google*, accessed June 30, 2016, <https://www.google.com/search?q=togo%2C+religions&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8Religions of Togo>.

Togo are adherents of Traditional Religion while Christianity and Islam represent respectively 29% and 20% of the whole population. It is admitted that Togo and the Republic of Benin constitute the cradle of Voodoo religion.¹⁰ Lomé the capital city shares border with the Republic of Ghana.

In 2010, the population of Lomé was 837,437.¹¹ The concentration of the quasi totality of economic activities of the country in Lomé and its seaport with an appreciable traffic capacity make Lomé attractive to rural people. This leads to a substantial rural depopulation which makes the population of Lomé to grow speedily.

Kegue is an urban area situated in the north east of Lomé. It used to be a suburb of the town but now has become part of it. Kegue harbors the only multi-sports stadium in the country. The area is highly populated and offers a great opportunity of sharing the everlasting gospel

Micro Context: Kegue SDA Church

This section of the research looks at Kegue SDA Church which is the micro context of the research. This section will cover the location of the church, history, and give

Location

Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church, as said in the introduction of this dissertation, is situated in the north-eastern suburb of Lomé the capital city of Togo.

¹⁰ Administrator, “Religions of Togo.”

¹¹ Administrator, “Economy of Togo.”

History

The church started with a public evangelism planned and run by Togo Mission Publishing department in 2000. The then Publishing Director of West and Central African Division. The preacher was the Publishing department director of the West Central African Division who was also the Global Mission director at the same level. So a lot of money was invested in this evangelistic effort. At the end of the program, 61 souls were baptized. Unfortunately, few months after this big celebration, only two people were left before one of them—an elderly man died.¹²

In 2009, another public evangelism held by a preacher of the project ‘SHARE HIM’ resulted in 31 baptisms. Unfortunately, the same scenario happened. Only one of them is in the church today. Kegue Church today is mainly made up of members of some other churches who have migrated to this area. Officially its membership until March 31, 2016 is 207 but the reality is that the average attendance on Sabbath day worship service is 124.

Small Group Ministry

Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church has been introduced to small group ministry at its creation in 2000. Unfortunately, this ministry remains ineffective. The church theoretically, numbers six small groups today and only three are somehow functioning. This is having a negative impact on the church’s discipleship process. Members’ involvement in Christian witnessing, meeting attendance, and finances among others are being significantly affected. There is therefore a need for a strategy to address this problem.

¹²The second, a woman is a faithful member with her two children, a girl and a boy, baptized into the church today and committed to their Lord and savior.

Research Design

This section of the work will the type of research, the rationale for selection, its appropriateness for the study, the population sampling, the criteria of the sampling procedure, and the instrumentation.

Type of Research

The method used for this research is a mixt method: a quantitative and a qualitative method. A quantitative research consists in collecting quantitative data or no-quantitative data turned into quantitative ones, analyzing them, using statistics to explaining a given phenomenon.¹³

The qualitative method consisted in resorting to key informants. Key informants are people the researcher selected because of their first-hand information they have concerning a given topic of interest.¹⁴

Rationale for Selection

Both methods have strengths and weaknesses. It is admitted that the qualitative method has more problems than the quantitative one. But it also recognized that when it comes to validity, the ratio is reversed.¹⁵ The mixt method helps minimize the weaknesses and maximize the strengths.

¹³ Mark Balnaves and Peter Caputi, *Introduction to Quantitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2001).

¹⁴ Administrator, "Key Informant Interviews | Better Evaluation," *Better Evaluation Sharing Information to Improve Evaluation*, accessed March 9, 2017, http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/key_informant_interviews.

¹⁵ Linda T Carr, "The Strengths and Weaknesses of Quantitative and Qualitative Research: What Method for Nursing?," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 20, no. 4 (March 9, 2017): 716–721.

Appropriateness of the Study

This mixt method allow to get a good number of members involved in the research and at the same time, have in-depth responses related to the problem being addressed. It gives answer not only to the how many “questions” but also to why “questions.”

Population and Sampling

The population used for this research is Kegue Church . Officially, the church membership as recorded in the statistics of the Mission is 207 but the average of Sabbath service attendance is 124. The sample for this research is 82 church members and the technique resorted to is consecutive sampling. Consecutive sampling is a non-random sampling. In this technique, the sampling error is hardly quantifiable. This is its disadvantage.

Nevertheless, consecutive sampling is considered as the best one of all non-random sampling techniques because it tends to include all the available members of the population and this makes the sample representative of the whole population.¹⁶ The sampling technique used therefore guaranties the representativeness of the population. In addition to that, the description of the participants will confirm it.

Criteria for Sampling Procedure and Selection

What is criterion sampling? It is the list of conditions predetermined by the researcher that a person is supposed to fulfill in order to be part of a sample.¹⁷ As far

¹⁶ Administrator, “Non-Random Sampling Design,” accessed June 6, 2016, <http://www.ubos.org/Compendium2012/NonRandomSamplingDesign.html>.

¹⁷ Administrator, “SAMPLING CRITERIA,” accessed June 6, 2016, http://www.health.herts.ac.uk/immunology/Web%20programme%20-%20Researchhealthprofessionals/sampling_criteria.htm.

as key informants are concerned, they must have been members from the inception of the church and have been elders, deacons or deaconesses. With regard to the quantitative method, the criteria sampling was anybody available.

Instrumentation

As research instrument, a questionnaire has been designed for surveying the target population. This questionnaire is informed by the overall goal of the research which is to design strategies that will make small group ministry in Kegue Church for discipleship. This overall goal is documented by the theological foundation and the review of literature in relation with small group ministry. These double foundations have revealed that for small group ministry to be a tool for discipling, it should create an environment propitious for community and fellowship, service to God and to fellow being. It should be a frame that help preparing people for such service and building leaders for the entire congregation. It should create conditions for the spiritual and numerical growth of the church. In a word, it should be a place where people love to be. The questionnaire comprises 47 variables which are grouped into five sections: A, B, C, D, and E.

Section A deals with the members' understanding and practice of small group ministry. Section B concerns the members' perception on the likely benefits of small group ministry for the individuals as well for the church. Section C deals with the likely challenges that might negatively affect small group ministry in Kegue Church .

In section D, opportunity is given to the members to make their recommendation to revive small group ministry in their church. And finally, section E is about the respondents, their sex, their age groups, their current functions in the church, their dominant spiritual gift, their preferred function in the church, the church program they love the most and the one they love the less, what make them feel like

staying in the church and what make them feel like leaving the church.

Data collection Procedures

At its committee session held on December 17-19, 2015, at his request, an action was taken authorizing the researcher to use Kegue Church as the frame of his project. In August 2013 which is the first year of this dissertation journey, Kegue Church was informed that it was chosen as a research field to experiment a church growth project. On January 6 2016, the researcher met with two elders of the church and shared with hem his plan to conduct a survey in their church in the frame of the project they already knew about. Then on January 9, after meeting with all the four elders, the church was officially informed about the project by the church elders.

On March 9, the researcher participated in the mid-week prayer meeting in the chosen church and reminded them of the survey which will be soon conducted. On March 18, the researcher led the Friday vesper program and made it an opportunity to call their attention on the survey which would be occurring the next day which was a Sabbath day. After this vesper service, the researcher met with all the four church elders and the Personal Ministry and Sabbath School departmental directors to explain to them the whole process. They were familiarized with the questionnaire and detailed explanations were given to them.

Meanwhile, four internship workers had been working with on the whole process. They received explanations on the questionnaire and were briefed as to the assistance they were expected to give during the survey. Their responsibility was to assist the illiterate members to fill the questionnaire. Stress was put on the fact that they were not expected to influence in any way the respondent. Their role was just while explanations were being given they should help the respondent follow the translation and the explanation given and make sure that the respondent understood

well and leave him or her to choose his or her answer.

On March 19, the researcher conducted the Sabbath worship service and it was another opportunity for him to explain how the survey process would look like. Let it be said that Kegue Church has a tradition which consists in spending the Sabbath afternoon on the church compound. In the afternoon, after some rest, the survey was done in the church on a voluntary basis.

The questionnaire was translated into French and every participant was given a copy. All participants were instructed concerning the objective of the exercise, the meaning of the sections making up the questionnaire, and the benefits the church would derive from the whole project. All those who were not at ease in French were asked to raise their hands, and were asked to sit down in such a way that the four assistants could be able to help them easily.

The whole process took three hours because the variables were taken one by one, translated into the local language, repeated and repeated again. Clarifications were allowed to be asked for. At the end, the four elders assisted by the four internship pastors collected the questionnaires while all participants were asked to remain in their place. In total, 90 questionnaires were distributed and 82 were collected back.

Data Analysis Techniques

Analysis of data is a process of studying data through analytic observations or a statistics tool such as the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), “with the goal of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision-making”.¹⁸

¹⁸ Administrator, “Data Analysis,” *Google*, accessed May 5, 2016, <https://www.google.com/search?q=data+analysis&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8>.

The data analysis techniques used are: descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations. Cross-tabulation is a data analysis method consisting in presenting the data on variables per demographic information.

Description of the Participants

The data presentation here aims at describing the demographic profile of those who participated in the survey. The participants comprise men and women young people and adults of different age groups. There are regular church members, regular visitors, and members of baptismal class's members. They pertain to various categories of functions. Some have no specific role in the church; others are elders, deacons, departmental leaders, departmental secretaries and assistant, members of the church choir. Here are illustrative tables and graphs of the participants' profile.

Table 3. Showing the Gender of the Research Participants

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	34	41.98
Female	47	58.02

As can be seen on table above, that out of the 82 participants, 34 are men, representing 41.98% and 47 are women representing 58.02%. The sample studied also shows that more than half of the church members are young or young adults. Out of the 82 members concerned by the study, 44 are young or young adult. The other significant observation revealed by the study is the good number of men and women above 50. They are 12 and represent 15% of the entire church. See the table above. Kegue Church seems to be sandwiched by the two extreme-age group as shown in the following graph.

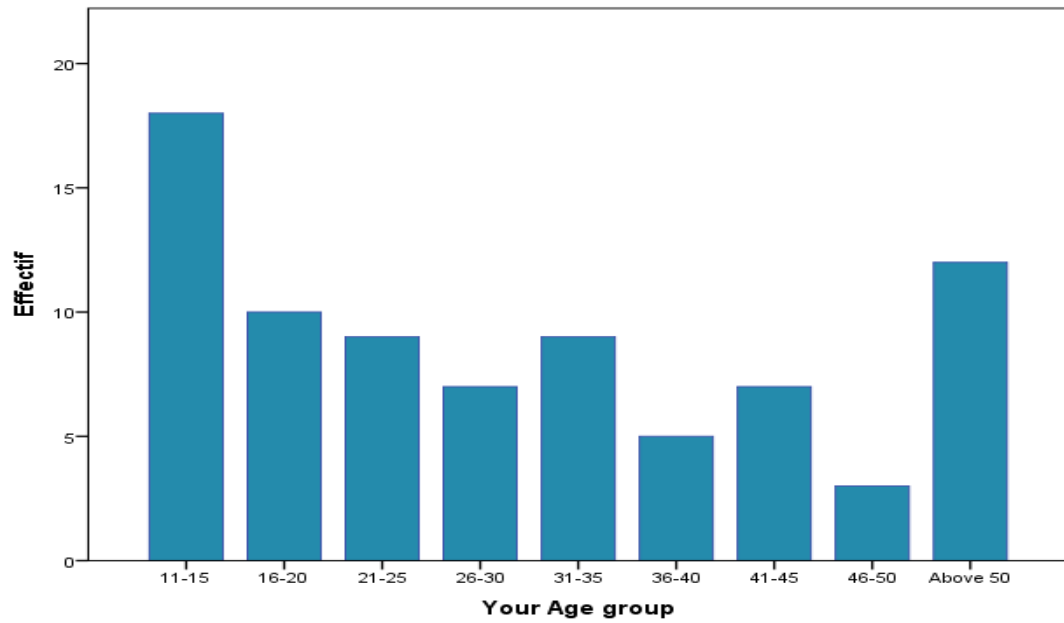


Figure 1. Age Distribution of Study Participants

There is another feature which characterizes this church that should not be overlooked: More than half of the respondents are in the church for only 1 to 5 years as shown on the graphic below.

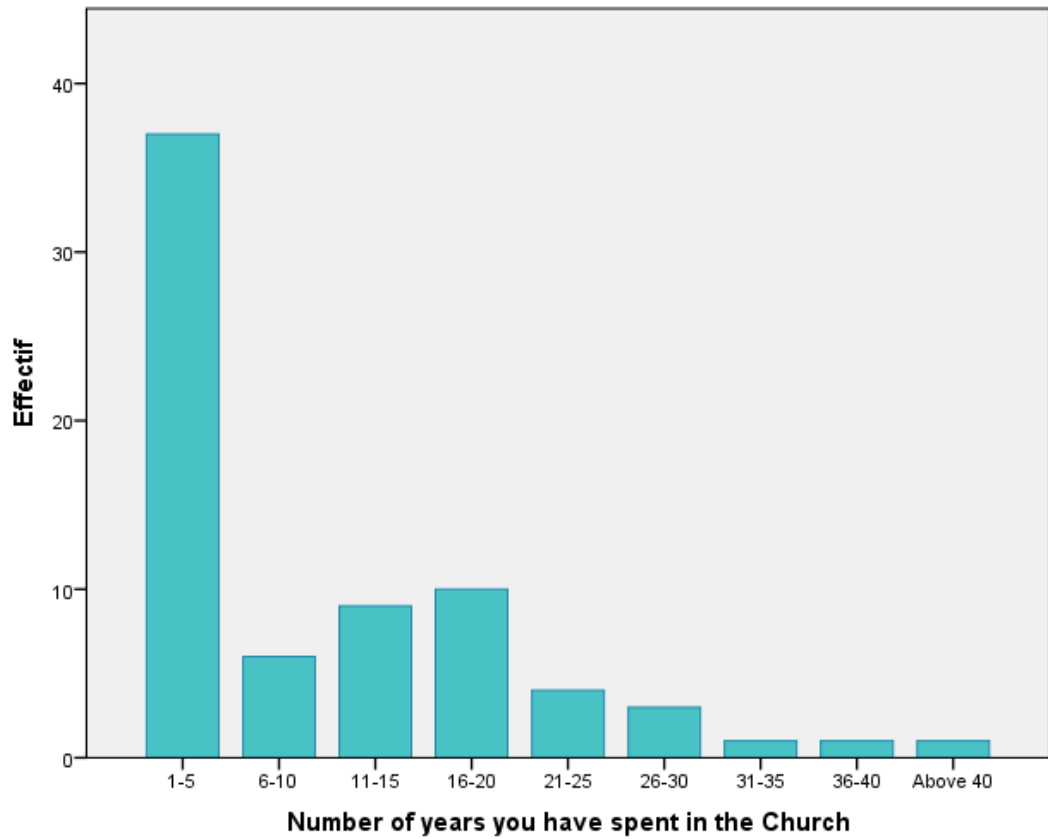


Figure 2. Number of Years Spent in the Church by Respondents

The respondents represent a variety of church members. There are elders, deacons, departmental leaders, assistant leaders, Sabbath school teachers, choir members, and many others who have no role in the church. This is an indication of their representativeness of the church.

Table 4. Church Roles Played by the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
No role	35	46.3
Sabbath School teacher	5	6.3
Departmental leader	4	5.0
Elder	4	5.0
Choir member	7	8.8
Deacon/Deaconess	14	17.5
Departmental Secretary	5	5.0
Departmental Assistant	4	6.3

Presentation and Description of the Findings

In this section, findings resulting from the survey will be presented. The information discovered will suggest conclusions that will in their turn inform strategies to meet the challenges revealed by these conclusions.

Section A

Participants were queried about their understanding and practice of small group ministry. The responses are summarized below.

Table 5. Participants' Understanding and Practice of Small Group Ministry

Variables	Not at all True	Not True	Somehow True	True	Very True	Total
a1	3	0	2	24	48	82
a2	6	7	26	29	14	82
a3	8	12	26	26	10	82
a4	28	19	8	15	12	82
a5	29	33	9	9	2	82
a6	29	18	3	16	16	82
a7	16	6	7	22	31	82

1. a1: I have heard of small ministry in my church
2. a2: Church leaders have taken time to teach and explain to the church what small

3. a3: I know clearly what small group ministry is all about
4. a4: There was a time my church was organized into small groups
5. a5: Church leadership have been running periodic workshops on small group ministries
6. a6: I once was a member of a small group in the church
7. a7: I currently belong to an active small group ministry

72 out of 82 participants said that they have heard about small group ministry while only 10 out of 82 have not. 43 out of 82 participants said that church leaders have taken time to teach and to explain what small group ministry is all about while 39 out of 82 deem that church leaders have not. 36 out of 82 the participants claim that they clearly know what small group ministry is all about while 46 out of 82 said that they do not.

55 out of 82 participants said that it is not true to say that there was a time that the church was organized into small groups while 27 out of 82 indicated that it can be said so. 11 out of 82 participants said that the church leadership have been running periodic workshops on small group ministries while 71 out of 82 said that this is not the case.

32 out of 82 the participants said that they were once members of a small group but now they do not while 50 out of 82 claim that they are still members of a small group. 53 out of 82 participants said that they belong to an active small group ministry while 29 said that they do not

Section B

Participants gave their views on the likely benefits of small group ministry. These are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Showing Participants' Perception on the Benefits of Small Group Ministry

Variables	Not at all likely	Not likely	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very likely	Total
b1	2	6	14	27	33	82
b2	3	5	11	32	31	82
b3	6	10	26	26	14	82
b4	2	0	11	37	32	82
b5	0	4	10	42	26	82
b6	1	7	9	37	28	82

1. b1: Individual spiritual growth
2. b2: Numerical growth
3. b3: Financial growth of the church
4. b4: Unity among believers
5. b5: Greater impact on the community
6. b6: Greater and faster revival

60 out of 82 the participants recognize that being involved in small group ministry will help them grow spiritually. 61 out the participants affirm that small group ministry will contribute to increase the membership of the church. 40 out 82 participants think that small group ministry will increase the finances of the church.

69 out of 82 participants said that small group ministry will foster unity among church members. 68 out 82 participants believe that small group ministry is one of the best way for the church to have a greater impact on the community around. 65 out of 82 participants believe that small group ministry will contribute to a greater and a faster revival in the church.

Section C

Participants further indicated the challenges likely affecting small group ministry. These challenges are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Showing Challenges Likely Affecting Small Group Ministry

Variables	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely	Total
C1	4	7	8	35	28	82
C2	8	6	33	32	13	82
C3	5	3	17	38	19	82
C4	6	3	18	28	27	82
C5	5	9	17	30	21	82
C6	6	9	23	24	20	82
C7	6	6	13	35	22	82
C8	8	8	6	23	37	82
C9	2	6	10	27	37	82
C10	6	10	3	22	41	82
C11	7	10	16	19	30	82
C12	5	4	11	28	34	82

1. c1: Lack of training for church members
2. c2: Wrong methods of putting people into small groups
3. c3: Lack of study materials for small group ministries
4. c4: Sinful practices prevailing in the church
5. c5: Antagonism from the communities around the church
6. c6: Many competing programs in the church
7. c7: Lack of practical demonstration of how a small group functions
8. c8: Conflict among small group members
9. c9: Lack of dedication among church leaders
10. c10: Conflict among church leaders
11. c11: Lack of gifted leaders in the church
12. c12: Lack of understanding of the concept of small group ministries

63 out of 82 participants esteem that lack of training is one of the challenges that affect small group ministry in the church. 45 out of 82 participants think that wrong method of constituting small groups is another thing which affect the effectiveness of this ministry in the church.

57 out of 82 participants believe that a lack of study material is also affecting small group ministry in the church. 55 out of 82 participants deem that sinful practices prevailing in the church is a hindrance to small group ministry.

51 out of 82 participants think that antagonism from the community around the church is also a challenge which affects this ministry. 44 out of 82 participants believe that many competing programs is also a challenge to this ministry in the church.

57 out of 82 participants said that a lack of practical demonstration on how small group function is another factor which affects small group ministry in the church. 60 out 82 participants affirm that conflict among small group members is also a challenge which impacts negatively this ministry.

64 out of 82 participants think that a lack of commitment among church leaders is a one of the negative factors affecting small group ministry in the church. 61 out of 82 participants said that conflict among church leaders also affect the efficiency of this ministry.

49 out of 82 participants believe that the lack of gifted leaders is one of the challenges small group ministry in the church is facing too. 62 out of 82 participants claim that the lack of understanding of the very concept of small group ministry is another factor affecting small group ministry in church.

Section D

Respondents put forth various ideas for reviving small group ministry. These ideas are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Recommendations to Revive Small Group Ministry

Variables	Not at all Recommended	Not Recommended	Somewhat Recommended	Recommended	Very Recommended	Total
d1	3	4	6	24	45	82
d2	1	2	5	23	51	82
d3	1	3	12	22	44	82
d4	0	1	4	26	51	82
d5	9	5	16	22	30	82
d6	13	6	10	19	34	82
d7	22	14	14	18	14	82
d8	6	9	21	23	23	82
d9	4	7	8	31	32	82
d10	0	4	12	31	35	82

1. d1: Organizing workshops for the whole church
2. d2: Training group leaders
3. d3: Pastor to form small group committee
4. d4: Pastor to visit small groups
5. d5: Allowing the church to decide how groups are formed
6. d6: Allowing individuals to form groups according to their affinities
7. d7: Forming groups according to age groups
8. d8: Forming group according to place of residence
9. d9: Setting small group days on the church's calendar
10. d10: Dedicating a whole quarter of Sabbath Bible study to small group ministry

69 out of the 82 participants recommend that workshop for the whole church should be organized. 74 out of the 82 participant recommend that the group leaders should be trained.

66 out of the 82 participants recommend that church pastor should form small group committee. 77 out of the 82 participants recommend that the church pastor should visit small groups.

52 out of the 82 participant recommend that the church should be allowed to decide the how small groups would be constituted. 53 out of the 82 participants recommend that people should be allowed to form their small groups by affinities.

32 out of the 82 participants recommend that small groups should be formed according to age groups. 46 out of the 82 participant recommend that the small groups should be constituted on the basis of places of residence.

63 out of the 82 participant recommend that small groups' days should be set on the church's calendar. 66 out of the 82 participant recommend that a whole quarter of Sabbath school lessons should be dedicated to small group ministry.

Section E

It has been already noted that the youth constitute the biggest component of Kegue Church . This is confirmed by the percentage of church members who prioritize youth programs over any other program. Almost 36% of the respondent said that youth programs are their most cherished programs as shown on the following graph.

Another feature of this church is the very low value the members grant to literature evangelism. Given the role of this ministry in the spread of the three angels' message in Seventh-day Adventist Church, there is a need to educate Kegue Church members on the importance of this ministry and help them to be involved in it.

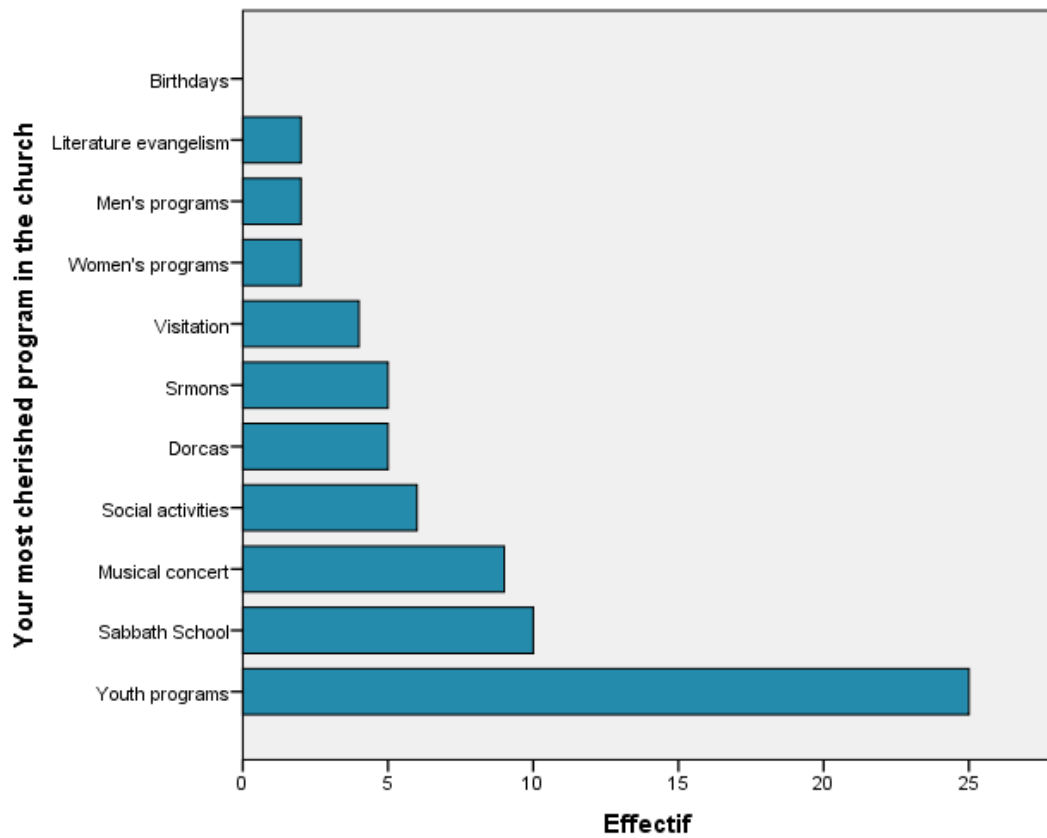


Figure 3. Preferred Church Programs of the Participants

Three things, essentially, make Kegue Church members feel like staying in the church. The first one is the truth taught by the church, the second one is the brotherly love atmosphere in the church, and the third one is social activities and care.

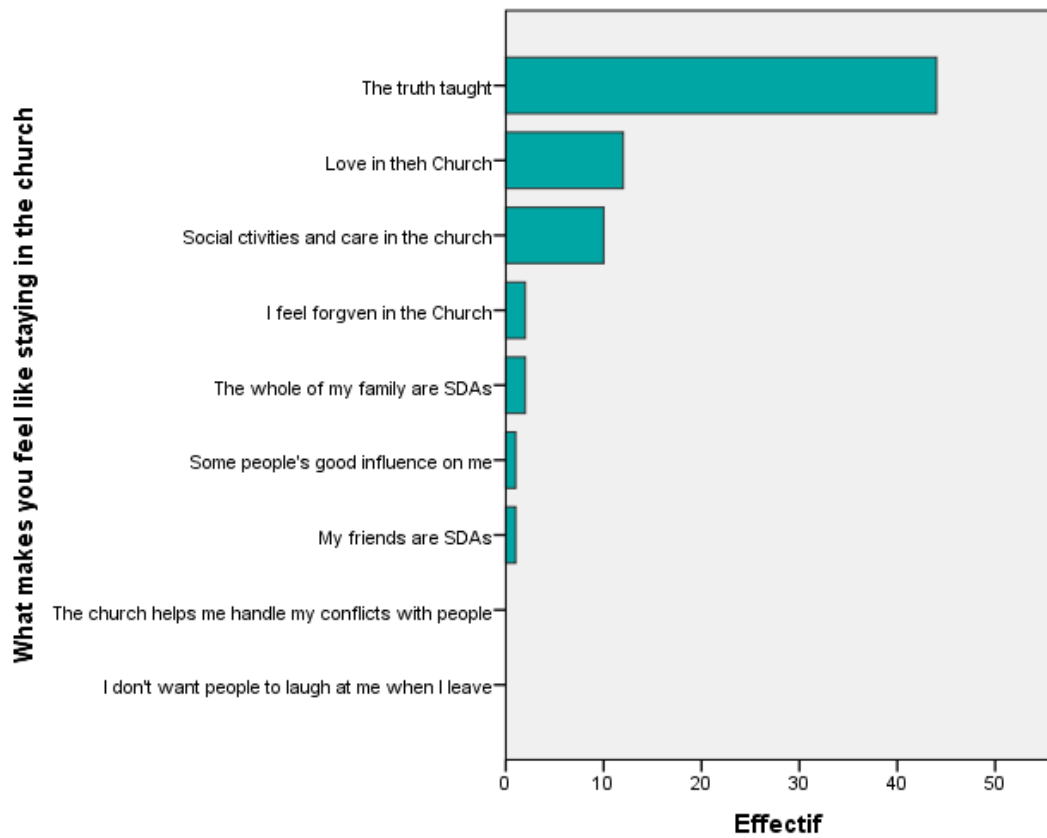


Figure 4. Factors that Make Participants Feel Like Staying in the Church

On the contrary, two outstanding things make them sometimes feel like leaving the church. These are “some people’s bad behaviors” and “lack of love” in the church.

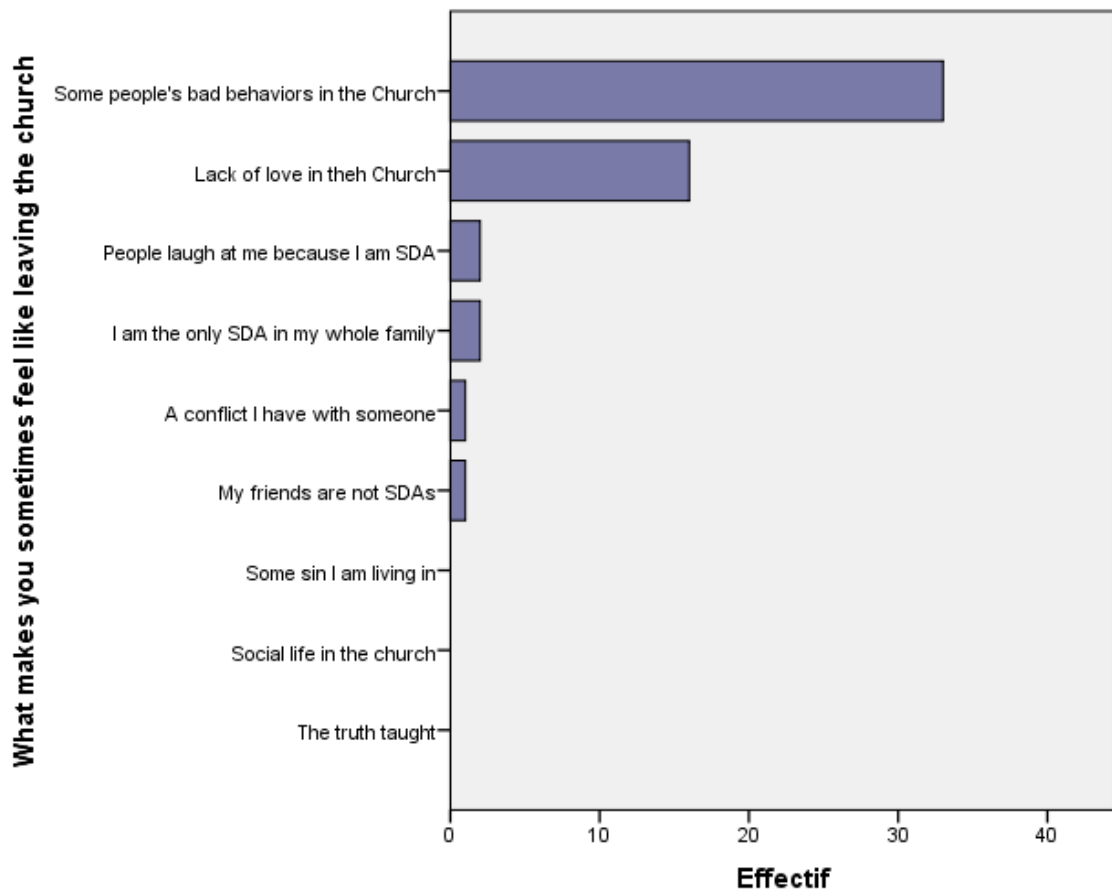


Figure 5. Factors that Make Participants Feel Like Leaving the Church

The three most important things that make church members feel like staying in the church are: the truth taught, brotherly love, social activities and care. The two major things that sometimes make them feel like leaving the church are: some people's bad behaviors and the lack of brotherly love in the church.

These two features put together, strongly suggest that the combination of a true community of Christian love and the truth as it is revealed in Jesus is what really make them feel like loving the church and staying in it. When asked what their greatest spiritual gifts are, here is their responses summarized in a graphic.

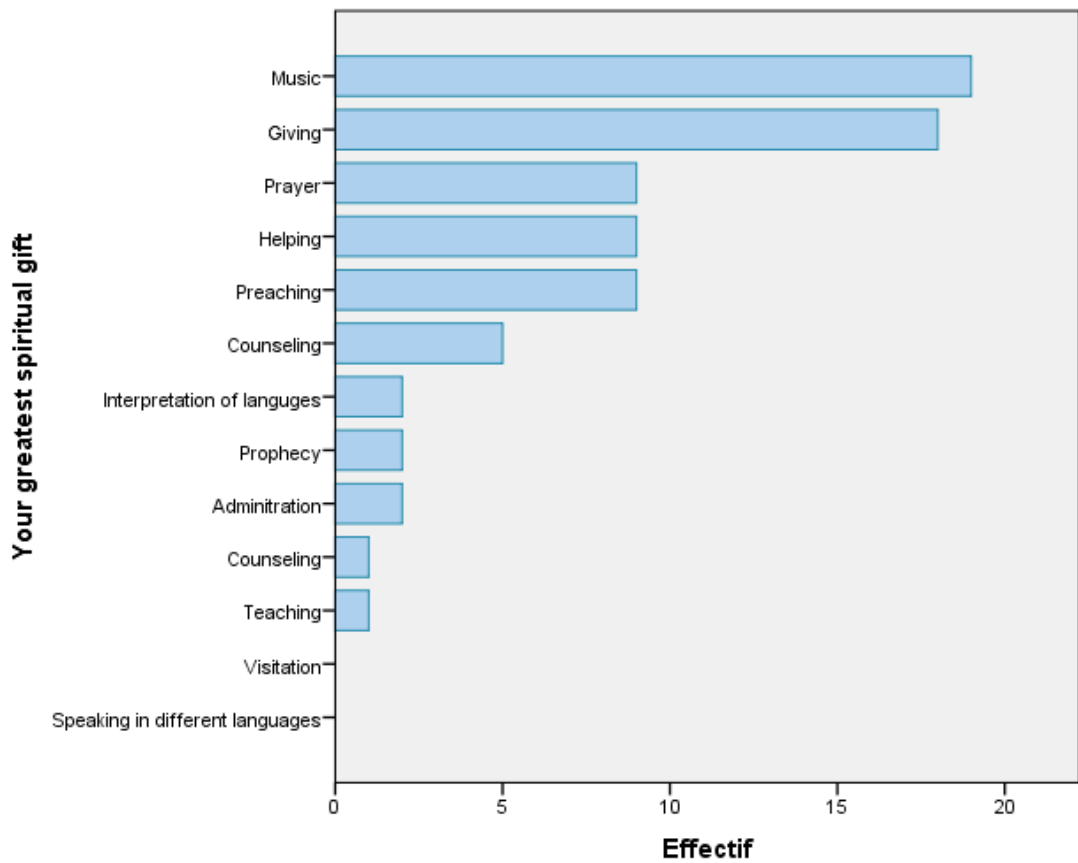


Figure 6. Participants' Spiritual Gifts

Music, prayer benevolence and preaching stand as the greatest spiritual gifts in the church. Singing and deaconry appear to be the most preferred function of the members with respectively 25% and 19% of the members as shown in the following graphic.

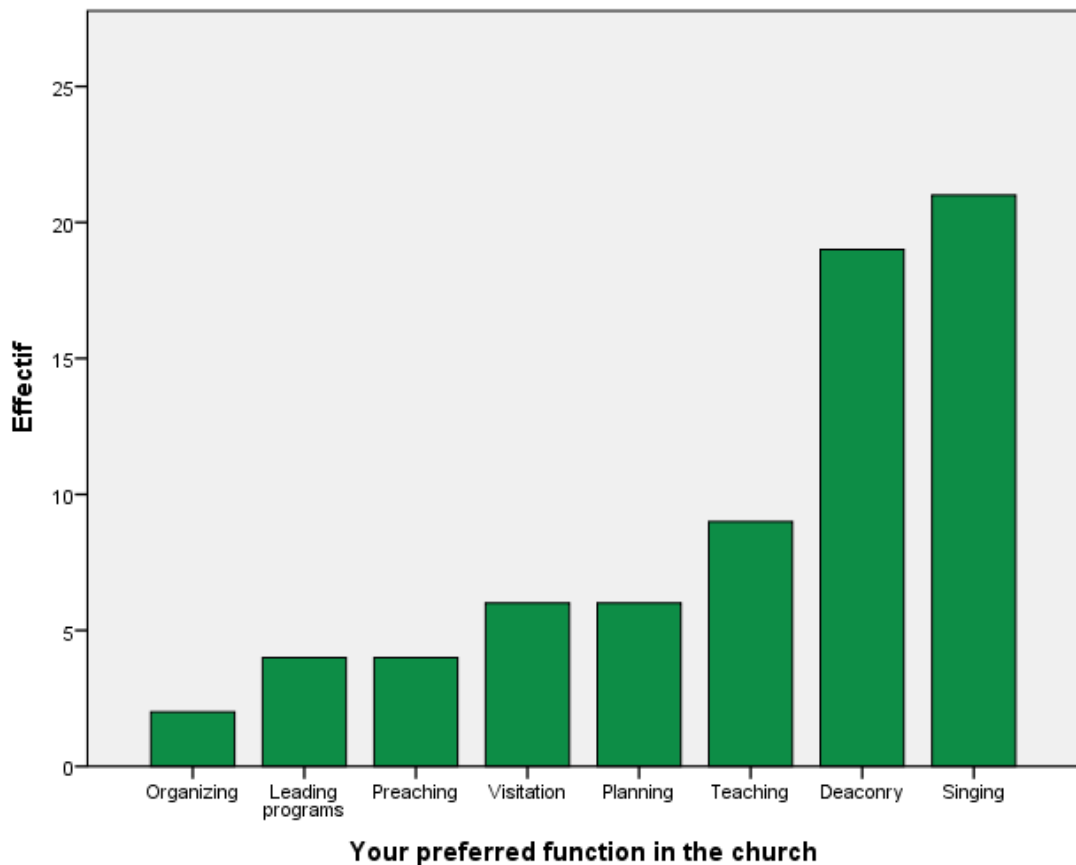


Figure 7. Participants' Preferred Functions in the Church

Analysis of Data

I.1. 72 out of 82 of the participants which is 87.80% of the church membership said that they have heard about small group ministry. I.2. 62 out of 82 of the participants which is 75.60% of the church membership said that they understood very well what small group ministry is all about. I.3. 60 out of 82 of the participants which is 73.17% of the church membership recognize that small group ministry fosters individual spiritual growth.

I.4. 68 out of 82 of the participants which is 82.92% of the church membership recognize that this ministry is a good way to witnessing to the neighbors. I.5. 63 out of 82 of the participants which is 76.82% of the church membership recognize that small group ministry is a means for a great and a faster revival. I.6. 69 out of 82 of the

participants which is 84.14% of the church membership recognize that small group ministry fosters unity among church members.

II.1. 39 out of 82 of the participants which represent almost half of the church membership said that they once belonged to a small group but now do not. II.2. 60 out of 82 of the participants which is 73.17% of the church membership said that they currently are members of a small group. III.1. 69 out of 82 of the participants which is 84.14% of the church membership said that church leaders took time to explain to them what small group ministry was all about. III.2. On the other hand, 62 out of 82 of the participants which is 75.60% of the church membership said that the church leadership had not been running workshops on small group ministry. III.3. 69 out of 82 of the participants which is 84.1% of the church membership recommended workshop for the whole church. IV.1 62 out of 82 of the participants which is 75.60% of the church membership said that there was a lack of understanding of the concept of small group ministry. IV.2 The same proportion earlier said that they understood very well what small group ministry was all about.

V.1. 74 out of 82 of the participants which is 90.24% of the church membership recommended training the small group leaders. V.2. 66 out of 82 of the participants which is 80.48% of the church membership recommended small group ministry committee in the church. V.3. 77 out of 82 of the participants which is 93.90% of the church membership recommended that the pastor should be visiting the small groups. VI.1. 37 out of 82 of the participants which is 45.12% of the church membership were young people at age of 11-25. VI.2. 24 out of 37 of the participants which is 64.86% of the church membership said that they did not clearly understand what small group ministry was all about.

VI.3. 18 out of 82 of the participants which is 21.95% of the church

membership are 11-15 years old which represents 21% of the membership. VI.3. only 5 out of 18 of these young people which is 27.78% said that they clearly understood what small group was all about. VI.4. 13 out of 18 of these young people which is 72.22% did not clearly understand what small group ministry was all about though even though 17/18 which is 94.44% said that they had heard about this ministry. VI.5. 37 out of 82 of the participants which is 45.12% of the church membership had only spent 1 to 5 years in the church. VI.6. 25 out of 37 of this youth which is 67.56% said that there was a lack of training. VI.7. 54 out of 81 which is 75% said there was a lack of training.

VII.1. 37 out of 82 have 1 to 5 years in the church and represent 45.12 of the total membership. 12 out of these 37 said they clearly understood what small group ministry was all about. This means that 25 out of these 37 therefore did not clearly understand small group ministry. VII.2. 25 out of 37 which is 67.56% of members who have 1 to 5 years in the church said that there was a lack of training. The conclusion is that during the five past years, there was no real training on small group ministry training. VIII. The findings on spiritual gifts may suggest that there is a need of a spiritual gifts discovery session to confirm or to invalidate them.

A close analysis of the data of section E shows that true community and fellowship on one hand and doctrines on the other hand are what make people in Kegue stay in the church. This is also supported by the number of participants and the percentage of the church membership who think that conflicts among church members is one of the challenges which may affect small group ministry. They are 60 out of 82 which represents 73.17%. Bearing in mind that currently, Kegue Church has 6 small groups and that out of these six, only three are somehow operational. What are the conclusions that the description of variables A, B, C, D suggests? I.1 to

I.6 suggests two things:

1. Either those who said that they clearly understood what small group ministry was all about did not really understand it. The number of participants who thought that the lack of understanding of the concept of small group ministry was one of the challenges that might likely have affected this ministry seemed to support this assumption. 62 out of 82 of the participants which represent 75.60% of the church membership admitted it.
2. Or they understood the concept but they were not interested in it. They were not interested in it because their needs and expectations were not met in these small groups. This might be supported by the fact that Christian love which is lived out is one of the two first things that make people staying in the church.

39 out of 82 almost half of the participants said that they once belonged to a small group but then they were not. Why were they no longer participating in their small group meeting? May be, for the same reason. Their need and expectations were not met.

60 out of 80 of the participants which is 73.17% of the church membership said that they currently belonged to a small group. But the truth is that there were just six small groups in the church and out of these six, only three were hardly operational. The conclusion may be that most of these 73.17% of the membership had their names in one small group by the decree of the church leadership but did not participate in any small group's program and the reason might be the same. They did not find any personal profit in these small group gatherings.

II.1 and II.2 show that many of those who said that they were currently members of a small group were members because the church leadership assigned them to one small group constituted on the only basis of the place of residence. The reality was that they did not participate in the life of the small group.

III.1, III.2, and III.3 reveal that there is a lack of practical training. IV.1 and IV.2 revealed that there was a confusion in the mind of the church members and there was a need of both theoretical and practical training.

Section D which dealt with recommendations called for training group leaders, workshops for practical training, setting a small group ministry committee in the church, pastors to invest themselves in this ministry by visiting on a regular basis small groups meetings, openness in forming small groups, dedicating a Sabbath on a basis which the church would decide on.

Designing of the Intervention

These were the activities which were done:

1. Training church members on small group ministry including its theological foundation and others' experiences on this ministry through a review of literature
2. Creating the awareness of the central role of community and fellowship in the success of small group ministry
 - a. Jesus and the community
 - b. The apostolic Church and community
 - c. African values on community: Ubuntu
 - d. Community and covenant/commitment
 - e. Community and honesty
 - f. Community and courtesy
 - g. Community and confidentiality
 - h. Community and humility
 - i. Community and frequency
 - j. Community and mutuality (Bible allelon commandments)
 - k. Community and communal meal (Agape)
 - l. Community and the Lord's supper
 - m. Community and social activities such as outings
 - n. The role of community in discipleship process
3. Making prayer an emphatic component of small groups' meeting
 - a. Prayer and deliverance

- b. Prayer and healing
 - c. Prayer and material prosperity
 - d. Prayer and protection
4. Making Bible study one of the major components of small groups' meetings (Teach the cooperative learning method).
 5. Making testimonies one of the major components of small groups' meeting
 6. Stressing the importance of outreach dimension of a successful small group ministry
 7. Training small groups' leaders
 8. Training program for pastors on the importance of pastoral involvement in small group ministry through visitations and ongoing training
 9. Organizing a spiritual gifts discovery session for church members
 10. Setting a small group ministry committee
 11. Have a small groups' day on the church calendar (A Sabbath of fellowship, prayer and testimonies with an adapted program)
 12. Constituting the small groups on the basis of free choice and leaving each member feel free to be part of a small group or not.
 13. Each small group during its first meetings should write a covenant, discuss it, and agree on it by signing it and publically vowing to abide by it.
 14. Have a new launching Sabbath of small group ministry

Limitations

The non-random sampling method that had been used did not allow sampling error to be reliably quantified. The success of the program depended on the church members buying into this strategy and their willingness to put it into practice

This chapter aims at designing an intervention to meet the problem Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church is facing with regard to small group ministry. The analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire led to crafting a fourteen point- intervention which would be implemented and reported in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Strategy implementation is defined as “the activity performed according to a plan in order to achieve an overall goal.”¹ A strategy how good it may be is useless if it is not implemented. Devising a strategy is one thing. Implement it is another one altogether. It is only when a strategy is implemented that it can be assessed and inspires eventual adjustments. It is observed that implementing a strategy “is as important, or even more important, than your strategy.”²

This dissertation aims at devising a strategy for an effective small group ministry to foster discipleship in Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church. In order to achieve this objective, a survey has been conducted to find out the perception of members of this church on small group ministry. The findings of this survey and their analysis led to identify a number of challenges which this church is facing as far as this particular ministry is concerned. To meet these challenges, fourteen point-strategy has been crafted (see chapter 4). This strategy is based on the theological foundation of this ministry, a review of literature on small group as a tool for discipleship, and the analysis of the findings from a study of Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church’s perceptions on small groups.

¹ Administrator, “Implementation-Definition and Meaning,” *BusinessDictionary.com*, accessed November 29, 2016, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/strategic-implementation.html>.

² Erica Olsen, “Strategic Implementation,” *OnStrategy*, n.d., accessed November 29, 2016, <https://onstrategyhq.com/resources/strategic-implementation/>.

In this chapter a brief description of the theological and biblical foundations of discipleship and small group ministry, a brief review of literature as related to the concept of discipleship and small group ministry, a succinct description of the project context, and the program development stages would be considered. In this latter session, the purpose of the whole program, the development of the strategy, the strategy implementation, the evaluation of the strategy, the project report would be successively examined. The chapter would end with some closing remarks.

Brief Description of the Theological Foundation of Discipleship and Small Group Ministry

The ultimate objective of evangelism is to make disciples. It is admitted that the Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28: 19 – 20 is the base of discipleship. The word itself is not found in the Bible but can be easily defined by the various virtues characterizing Christ's disciple. The primary characteristic of a disciple is his unconditional love for Christ His master. The concept of disciple, though rare, is nevertheless present in the Old Testament: Abraham was God's disciple. He was expected to make of his children disciples for God. (Gen 18: 19). All Israelite parents were to do so (Deut. 6: 5 – 9). The disciple was a learner taught by God Himself and it was expected of him to attentively listen to His master and follow in His steps. (Is 50: 4)

Any church management program should be rooted in the Scriptures. Small group ministry as a church management strategy is abundantly supported by the Word of God. The Old Testament, the New Testament and the Writings of Ellen G. White are full of small group ministry principles. It is established that the first purpose of small group is community and fellowship. A small group where community atmosphere is absent is no longer a small group in a biblical sense. God is community

and so were Adam and Eve. God gave them the Sabbath day as the first day before they even did any kind of labor is probably the proof that this day is meant for communion and fellowship, communion and fellowship with God and with each other. Working towards establishing this community atmosphere and strengthening it would help rule out any kind of discrimination based on race, ethnic consideration, and social rank. This would contribute surely to the unity of the Church and its growth. This was the case of the apostolic church described in Acts of the Apostles. Exodus 18, Joshua 7, and Luke 9: 10 – 17 offer a model of managing a large group by splitting it into several small groups. Jesus' example of selecting the Twelve out of the crowd of people who was following Him showed that small groups as Christian gatherings constituted a fruitful environment for training and involvement in ministry. Small groups are efficacious and efficient for people management, training and involving in witnessing.

Brief Description of the Review of Literature on Discipleship and Small Group Ministry

A number of scholars seem to make a difference between “disciple making” which they see in Matt 28: 19 – 20 and “discipleship which they do not see in Scripture. They describe discipleship as “the believer’s spiritual growth” while disciple making has to do with evangelism. “Disciple making” in this case, is concerned with bringing unchurched persons to Christian faith while “Discipleship” is nurturing, something restricted to spiritual growth. Other equate the two words and defined discipleship as investing oneself in others by teaching them the Word of God, how to fellowship with other Christians, how to minister to others so that they become strong believers ready to share their faith with others.

Discipleship is seen as a tri-dimensional process beginning with a call. Jesus

calls people and those who respond to the divine call take an engagement towards themselves, others, and the world. A section dealing with discipleship in African context has been captured in the review of literature because God has always encountered people in their own cultural contexts. In discipleship process, the discipler should always seek ways which would allow him to make the gospel message relevant to the ones who would be disciplined. The message should be critically contextualized, doing away with cultural elements which are detrimental to God's message but retaining those which would allow the gospel to remain faithful to its original identity yet transformed by its new context.

Small groups are considered by a number of authors as a means for making and developing disciples. Small groups are seen as places conducive to experiencing heart transformation. They constitute a setting for true community where members care for one another:

A small group is a group of people who truly become friends – friend who are there for each another whether they are sad, happy, discouraged, celebrating, or mourning. Friends who pray with you, challenge you, hold you accountable, laugh with you, and love you no matter what you do or where your past has taken you. Together, by God's grace and power, they live out the phrase 'we want to see Jesus (John 12: 21) in the way we treat each other.'³

Such a community contributes to the spiritual and numerical growth of the church. Small groups are also a good frame for building church leaders. Open discussion which characterizes a small group contribute efficiently to the group members learning process. Small group frame offers opportunity to go through the four areas where Christianity is experienced: inreach, upreach, reaching across, and outreach. In inreach, God reaches His child through His Word. In upreach, the believer reaches to God through prayer, in reaching across, the group's members

³ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 19.

reach to one another through tangible manifestations of Christian love, and in outreach, the believer reaches to his fellow beings through witness. Small group setting encourage the group members to share personal testimonies about how the Lord has been good to them because of the confident they have in one another and their strong faith in their all-powerful Savior to protect them. An agreement binding the group members, a vision always kept alive, and an ongoing evaluation are necessary for a successful small group.

As in literature review on discipleship, a section on African traditional community is provided. The spirit of community which is the base of an effective small group ministry is imbibed in African consciousness. The individual exists except in relation of the other members of the society. He is because the others are. Prayer is also a binding element of African society. Individuals of the same community are bound in worship. Unfortunately, fear of evil spirits constitutes a threat to the spirit of community. Therefore, the group members need their faith to be strongly built on Jesus' all surpassing power.

Brief Description of Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church

Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in a suburb of Lomé eastwards which, like many other suburbs, has become part of the capital. An identifying element of this area is the international stadium which bears the name of the location: Kegue Stadium. The past history of Kegue Church reveals that the main challenge confronting this church is the massive loss of newly baptized members after a public evangelism. This phenomenon is a clear sign that the discipleship process received little attention. Small group ministry was introduced but not effective. Currently, the membership of the church is 207.

The average Sabbath worship attendance is 124. The Church attendance of both the midweek prayer meeting and the vesper service is 47%. This apparent low attendance may be explained by the fact that women who represent the majority of church members are retailers in the various markets which are sometimes far away from their homes. Kegue SDA Church is supervised by a district pastor and is currently overseen by four elders.

Program Development Plan

This section would cover the various steps of the whole process of the program implementation. The purpose of the program, the methodology of implementing and evaluating the intervention, its implementation, and its evaluation will be considered. The section would end with the program report and some closing remarks.

The Purpose of the Program

The overall objective of this program is to help Kegue SDA Church members have a new perception of small group ministry based on the Scriptures, the Writings of Ellen G. White, and a review of literature dealing with this God-intended instrument for Christian discipleship. It is hoped that at the end of the whole program, they would see small group ministry in a new light that would enhance their interest for this particular ministry. It is also expected that the implementation of the strategy arrived at would make this church more a place where people would love to be because of the atmosphere of Christian brotherly love which would be pervading all small groups and thenceforth, the entire church.

Development of the Strategy

The fourteen-point strategy devised to meet this overall objective are based on three things: the biblical foundation of small group ministry, a review of literature on the subject and the findings from a questionnaire given to 82 people. The sampling technique used is the consecutive sampling which is considered as the best one of all non-random samplings. The questionnaire is made up of 47 variables which are grouped into five sections. The objective of this questionnaire is to know church members' understanding and practices of small group ministry, their perception of the likely benefits of small groups for the group members as well as for the whole church, the challenges that are negatively affecting this ministry, and finally their recommendation for improvement. The last section of the questionnaire deals with gender, their spiritual gifts and things they do or do not like in the church. The analysis of the findings from the questionnaire reveal that a strategy for an effective small group ministry to foster discipleship in Kegue SDA Church should take into consideration three points.

1. Creating an environment of community and Christian fellowship
2. Training which integrates people's personal spiritual, emotional, and physical needs and African worldview
3. Putting into practice expectations highly recommended by the church members

Implementation and Evaluation Methodology

The strategy has been implemented through sermons, seminars, and coaching in small groups gatherings. In total, four sermons have been preached and twenty seminars conducted Wednesdays and Fridays, and Sabbath afternoons. As for the evaluation of the intervention, a questionnaire in four points has been designed:

1. What did you learn during this training that helped you get a better understanding

of small group ministry?

2. In your opinion, why community spirit is basic for the effectiveness of small group ministry?
3. What aspects of the entire program do you deem useful for your small group?
4. After the whole program, how do you, from now on, view small group ministry?

Preparation for Program Implementation

July 18, 2016, a time table for the intervention was sent from Babcock University (Nigeria) to the first Elder of the church. This time table shows the different sermons topics that were preached, the various themes that were taught during the seminars and the workshops scheduled for practical training. August 6, 2016 was set as the starting date of the program implementation. But very soon, it was obvious that this time table could not work because it conflicted with an evangelistic program initiated by Eastern Sahel Union Mission and co-financed by the Division, the Union and all its five local Fields. This program was scheduled for two weeks starting from August 28 to September 10 on which a baptismal service was planned in all the five countries of the Union.

Therefore, Kegue Church like all other churches was involved in preparing this evangelistic event. July 30 in the afternoon, there was a working session with the church leadership to readjust the schedule. There was an agreement that midweek prayer meetings, vespers as well as some Sabbath mornings, and afternoons would be used for the implementation of the intervention. August 3 and 5 evenings were useful opportunities to prepare the church with regard to the intervention, its relevancy in all ages and the blessing it would represent for the whole church, and individual members.

Program Implementation

This area of the dissertation discusses the implementation of the intervention to address the issues that emanate from the research.

First Session: Sermon

The program implementation properly started with a sermon presented on Sabbath, August 6, 2016 during the worship service. It was titled “The Community Spirit: The Secret of the Apostolic Church’s Strength”. Here is its outline.

1. Key Bible Text: Acts 2: 44 – 47
2. Introduction: Rev. 6: 1 – 2
3. The rapid growth of the Apostolic Church
4. Acts 1: 15; 2: 41; 4: 4; 6: 7
5. Two factors for this rapid growth
6. Spirit of community: Acts 2: 44 – 47
7. Home churches: Acts 2: 46; 20; 5: 42; 20: 20; Rom. 16: 5; 1Cor. 16: 19; Phil. 4: 22; Col. 4: 15; Phlm. 1: 20
8. The four “Reachings” that occur in home gatherings settings
 - a. Inreach
 - b. Upreach
 - c. Reaching across
 - d. Outreach

The attendance that first Sabbath which was the starting point of the program implementation was one hundred and fifty-three people. There was no meeting in that Sabbath afternoon because the church was organized into visiting pairs in preparation of the evangelistic campaign ahead.

Second Session

August 10, biblical basis of small group ministry. Any ministry in the church must be backed by the Scripture. So is small group ministry. Examples from both Old Testament and New Testament show that God's people were organized into small units for various purposes. Israel was organized into tribes, families and houses (Jos. 7: 14). For an easy and equitable management of the people, Moses divided the entire congregation into smaller groups (Exod. 18). The church in the New Testament was constituted by house churches (Acts 2: 46, 47; 12: 12; Rom 16: 14, 15; 1 Cor 16: 19; Col 4: 15; Phil 2) it is obvious that the Apostolic church was dependent on the generous hospitality of its members who gladly made available their houses for church activities. These house churches and especially their brotherly love atmosphere constituted the secret of the rapid growth of the Christian church during the first centuries.

The Lord, through visions given to Ellen G. White, confirmed to the intent of His church that this strategy of the early church is still his recommended method for Christian discipleship. The instruction given to her is clear: "If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers."⁴ The number of people who attended this session was fifty-four. Comparatively to the attendance of the Sabbath morning service, one may say that it was too low. But when it is remembered that the majority of the church members are women and that they are retailers in markets, this attendance might be satisfactory.

⁴ White, *Christian Service*, 72.

Third Session: August 10

Fifty-three participants attended this third session. The concept presented that evening was ‘African Community Spirit.’ The purpose of the presentation was to teach that traditional Africans shared in the biblical community spirit more than the westernized world and that they would better cling to this biblical culture rather than modeling the western individualism which is a curse to the church. Traditional African does not exist apart from the group. Community is intrinsic to his nature. He is always in situation of “relationship and interdependence.” For him, man is community as well as the world he lives in. A small group which is not community is tasteless for a traditional African and at the end, will become repulsive.

Fourth Session: August 13 Sabbath Afternoon

This session began a series of studies dealing with initiatives conducive to strengthening the community spirit. They are all the materialization of the “new commandment” the Lord gave to His own: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13: 34). When Christian love is lived out among the group members, there are some behaviors that they would not show to one another. These behaviors are what can be termed as “negative ‘Allêlôn’ commandments”. They are detrimental to the unity of the church. Here is the list thereof which may not be exhaustive.

1. Judging not one another (Rom 14: 13)
2. Going not to law one with another (1 Cor 6: 7)
3. Be consumed not one of another (Gal 5: 15)
4. Provoking not one another, nor envying one another (Gal 5: 26)
5. Lying not one to another (Col 3: 9)
6. Speaking not evil one of another (Jas 4: 11)

7. Grudging not one against another (Jas 5: 9)

On the other hand, there are what could be termed as “positive ‘Allêlôn’ commandments which if practiced, strengthen the group’s unity. Twenty one of them are listed below:

1. Caring one for another (1 Cor 12: 25)
2. Showing tender affection to one another (Rom 12: 10)
3. Being of the same mind towards one another (Rom 12: 16 ; Rom 15: 5)
4. Receiving one another just like Christ has received us (Rom 15: 7)
5. Admonishing one another (Rom 15: 14; Col 3: 16; Heb 3: 13; Heb 10: 25)
6. Saluting one another with an holy kiss (Rom 16: 16; 1 Cor 16: 20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1Pet 5: 14).
7. Serving one another with love (Gal 5: 13; 1 Pet 4: 10)
8. Bearing one another's burdens (Gal 6: 2)
9. Forbearing one another in love (Eph 4: 2; Col 3: 13)
10. Speaking truth to one another in love (Eph 4: 25; Col 3: 9)
11. Being kind to one another (Eph 4: 32; Rom 12: 10)
12. Forgiving one another (Eph 4: 32; Col 3: 13)
13. Being voluntarily submitted to one another in the fear of God (Eph 5: 21; 1 Pie 5: 5; Jean 13: 14)
14. Comfort one another (1 Thess 4: 18; 5: 11)
15. Edifying one another (1 Thess 5: 11)
16. Considering one another (Heb 10: 24)
17. Confessing faults to one another (Jas 5: 16)
18. Praying for one another (Jas 5: 16)
19. Showing compassion to one another (1 Pet 3: 8)
20. Being hospitable to one another (1 Pet 4: 9)
21. Having fellowship with one another (1 John 1: 7)

Photocopies of this presentation were made and distributed to all participants. They were one hundred and thirty (131)-one all in all.

Fifth Session: August 17 Sharing Meal Together

The biblical model taught was the custom of Job's sons and daughters. In Job 1: 14, it is said that Job's sons would feast in their houses in turns and invite their three sisters. This oriental practice is probably meant to strengthen the family bonds. This would help Job's children keep their brotherly love one to another alive and strong.

Sharing meal together is a strong sign of love and fellowship in traditional African context. Special attention should be given to this bonds-sharpening practice. During the training, group members were encouraged to organize from time to time Holy Communion service in their groups along with Christian love meal like in the apostolic time. They were happy and excited to begin with this practice. They were sixty-two who took part in this session.

Sixth Session: August 19 The Importance of Visiting One Another

The attendance to this session was seventy-four people. Visiting one another is another vital sign of love and fellowship in African context. There is an African saying which says that visiting a brother is indeed being brothers. This other brotherly bonds-strengthening practice was derived from another custom held by Job's children. In the same passage of Job 1: 4, it is clear that the feasting was also occasions for these children to visit one another.

Using this model, members of some small groups are holding their meetings in the house of any group member who is able and willing to host the meeting. They are very excited about this experience. Some of them said that this would prevent the

group dislocation which often occurs when the meetings host is moved or apostatizes. Based on this model, some group members have already begun visiting one another. Plans are made to visit those who missed a meeting to inquire after them.

Seventh Session: August 20 Second Sermon

The topic of the sermon preached that Sabbath morning was “Two human tendencies that threaten unity”. This sermon was intended to stress the negative impact of prejudices based on racial, ethnic or linguistic issues on unity among group members. The Bible reading was from Ephesians 2: 14. Here is the outline of the preaching

Introduction: Sin perverted man’s perception of his fellow (illustration: Gen 3: 12)

1. Prejudices based on racial issues are destructive to the spirit of community
 - a. Aaron and Miriam’s prejudice about Zipporah
 - b. Consequence: family bonds disrupted (Num 12: 1)
2. Prejudices based on linguistic issues are a threat to community
 - a. Jews speaking Hebrew and Jews speaking Greek (Acts 6: 1)
3. God disapproves prejudices based on races, ethnic groups, or spoken languages
 - a. Aaron and Miriam punished (Num 12: 9, 10)
4. The Apostles disapprove the discrimination and solved the issue (Acts 6: 2 – 6)

One hundred and fifty-six people participated in this Sabbath session. In reason of the evangelistic program in which all the churches were involved, a halt in the implementation of the intervention was observed. It was resumed on September 17, 2016.

Seventh Session: September 17 Third Sermon

The attendance to this Sabbath worship service was one hundred and fifty-four worshipers. Here is the outline of the sermon.

Bible Text: Ps 133

Title: The joy of a family Reunion

1. Introduction
2. The historical and geographical context of the reunion 1 Sam 22: 1
3. God created human being sociable Gen 2: 18
4. David's experience of loneliness
5. The joy of a family reunion
6. A small group is a family
7. Brotherly love is the strength of a small group
8. Brotherly love compared to:
 - a. The sacred oil poured on Aaron's head
 - b. The refreshing dew of Hermon symbolizing God's blessing

Eighth Session: September 21 Christian Socialism

One of the ways of showing brotherly love in the church is to fulfill Jesus' commandment in Gal 6: 2: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Surely, the group's members fulfill this commandment by praying one for another. But this admonition also means caring for physical needs of the group's members. This is evident from the model practiced by the early church. The model is recorded in Acts 4: 32 – 36. The church was a kind of commonwealth where the needs of all members were taken care of, the stronger caring for the weaker. On this model, a relief fund is created in all small groups and is funded by voluntary contributions. These contributions are pooled together and any group member to

whom a misfortune befalls, irrespective of the fact that he contributed or not, is assisted. The model was warmly welcomed and is being practiced. Sixty-three people attended this meeting.

Ninth Session: 23 September The Group Covenant

Agreed upon covenant is vital for a healthy community. The covenant holds the group together and constitutes a kind of rudder guiding the group's members. After explaining to them the importance of a group covenant, giving them some element to be considered in writing a covenant, there was an open discussion on the matter where everybody contributed to what a small group covenant could look like. Seventy-two participants were present at this session.

Philadelphia group covenant. Here is the covenant of one of the small groups constituted at the end of the whole training session. Its name is Philadelphia.

1. Sunday evening is the meeting day
2. The meeting starts at 6. 30 pm and ends at 7. 30 pm
3. Philadelphia is the name of the group
4. The meeting place is the house of Elder Maxime Keke but can be moved to the house of another group member's house if agreed on by the group
5. Every member attend the meeting on a regular basis
6. The group exists for two purposes: Christian fellowship and Evangelism
7. The group will have a communal meal once a quarter
8. The group will have the Lord Supper when agreed on and after a consultation with the church leadership
9. Each group member should know the house of the others
10. The group will have a "Relief Fund" for the purpose of financial supporting morally and financially a member going through a trial. It is funded by voluntary offering just as it is done during the Sabbath worship service

11. The group will organize an evangelistic event once a quarter and every member will invite at least one friend
12. Conflicts will be solved through Jesus' recommendations in Matthew 18: 15 – 20
13. Courtesy is the Golden Rule of the group

Tenth Session: September 24 Literature Review on Small Group Ministry

One hundred and thirty-nine people participated in this meeting. The objective is to share with church members the results of experiences done by others as far as small group ministry is concerned. Stress was put on traditional African spirit of community, African world view which needs to be taken into consideration in small groups' program. For example, the fear of spirit, the belief in prayer. The benefits of small group ministry for individuals as well for the church. Such as faith building through Bible study and prayer, leaders building for the church, witnessing opportunities for members by just inviting friends and neighbors. This session offered also opportunity for stressing the role of the three key persons of a small group that is the leader, his assistant, and the host. Advantage was taken of the fact that almost all the church members were present, since it was a Sabbath afternoon, to teach the importance of testimonies in small groups. They are appropriate for strengthening the faith of both the one sharing his testimony and those hearing it. It has been discovered that people are reluctant to share with others what the Lord has done for them out of fear of evil spirits. They have been taught on Jesus' all power over demons (Matt 28: 18; Col 2: 15; Heb 2: 14, 15; Phil 3: 10). The infatuation for Prayer Mountains and the temptation for church members to attend was also considered. They have been reminded of the God's power which is manifested both in valleys and mountains (1 Kgs 20: 17, 28; Ps 121: 1 – 2).

Eleventh Session: September 28 The Role of the Three Key Persons of a Small Group

This session begins the training of a small group leaders namely the leader, his assistant, and the host/hostess.

The leader. He is the first key person of the small group and as such, he is the overseer of the whole life of the group. He supervises the group's activities not only when the group meet but also besides the meetings. He is the one to make sure the assignments to the group members such as visiting an absentee and report to the group are done. He is the facilitator of the leaders' meetings and makes sure these meetings are weekly held. He guides the group in writing their covenant and their strategic planning. He is the link between the group and the church leaders who are the elders and the pastor.

The assistant leader. He is the right hand of the group leader. He replaces him when he is absent. He helps the leader in recruiting new members of the group and also in the follow-up of the missing ones. He is being trained on the job and naturally will become the leader of the new group when time has come for the group to be divided.

The host/hostess. One of the challenges confronting small group ministry in Kegue Church is meeting places. Most of church members do not have their own houses and even though they would gladly house a small group, they could not. The few who have their own houses were not always willing to host a small group gathering sometimes out of fear to expose themselves to ill-intentioned people.

They have been reminded of the blissful experience of Obed-Edom who hosted God's Ark after it had been brought back from the land of the Philistines. After God's judgement on Uzza who put forth his hand to hold the Ark, David was afraid of

God and renounced to have it carried to his house. He made the Ark to be carried into Obed-Edom's house. God blessed this man's house because of the presence of the Ark (2 Sam 6: 6 – 12). This story was gradually changing the perception of some who accepted to house small group meetings.

The hosts play important role in the sustainability of the group. They would always be there as much as possible making sure that everything is in place before the group members begin to arrive. As much as it depends on them, the frame should be made attractive for the group members not only physically but above all, emotionally. They should be hospitable showing that they delight receiving their homes and never try to usurp the role of the group leaders' role. There were sixty-four attendees to this training session.

Twelfth Session: September 30 Leaders' Training Continued

Seventy-two people participated in this session. During this training, three modules have been studied: the virtues of a group leader, wrong and good motivations for a leadership position, and the different leadership styles.

1. Virtues of a group leader.
 - a. Developing a personal relationship with all group members
 - b. Being sensitive to the needs of each member
 - c. Being an example of accepting and respecting other and their opinions
 - d. Leading the group discussion in such a manner to give chance to all equally
2. Wrong motives for leadership position
 - a. The pursuit of recognition and respect
 - b. The pursuit of power and authority
 - c. The pursuit of admiration

- d. The pursuit of lording it over others
3. Good motives
- a. The desire to lift up Jesus and glorify God
 - b. The desire to please God in putting one's talents into His service
 - c. The desire to contribute to the growth of the church
 - d. The desire to connect others to Jesus
 - e. The desire to tell others that Jesus' religion can meet their personal needs
4. The different leadership styles

The autocratic style, the authoritative style, the democratic style, the laissez-faire style, the servant-leader style, and the situational leadership style.

During this leaders' training, a suggestion was made to them about how to "break the glass" at the beginning of a meeting in order to make everybody feel at ease and create a mirthful mood for the meeting. It would be asked anybody of the group to prepare a tale or a riddle which convey a spiritual lesson or a lesson of life. Africans are fond of tales and riddles.

Thirteenth Session: October 5 Conflict Resolution

After having clearly defined a conflict, it has been observed that the problem is not the conflict which is natural but the way it is managed. The different sources of conflicts in the church have been studied. They are classified in three major categories:

1. Relational (communication, personality, interpersonal competition)
2. Spiritual (jealousy, envy, and unwillingness to forgive),
3. Divergent perceptions of the way the Mission is to be fulfilled.

It is said that 80% of conflicts have their root in interpersonal relationship. It has been noted that whatever the conflict may be, it should be addressed. A simple but

deep definition of conflict resolution has been provided and four steps to manage a conflict have been presented:

1. The conflict must be acknowledged
2. The conflict must be owned by the group
3. The conflict must be discussed and clarified by the group
4. The group must be committed to solve the conflict in a transformational way.⁵

In addition to this, eight ways of conflict resolution drawn from the book of Proverbs were presented. A special attention was given to the relation transformation conflict management in which all the parties involved in the conflict work together in such a way that they learn useful lessons that make them grow emotionally, intellectually, and relationally for the wellbeing of the church.⁶ Sixty-eight participants were present at this prayer meeting.

Fourteenth Session: October 7 Small Groups and Evangelism

Sixty-two people took part in this training meeting. Evangelism is the blood of small groups. A small group where evangelism is missing is a dying group and would sooner or later die. During this session, church members were exposed to a simple way to witness for Christ. It is called “Philip’s method” and is recorded in John 1: 43 – 46. The method consists in organizing evangelistic events such as the Lord’s Supper and inviting friends and neighbors to come and see how Adventists celebrate it. It can also be a potluck, a group member’s anniversary, a special prayer meeting, or inviting an expert for a training session on “Revenues Generating Activities. Members are

⁵ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups From Theory To Service*, 83.

⁶ David W, *Managing Conflict in the Church*, 15.

encouraged just to invite friend and acquaintances to attend, just telling them like Philip to Nathanael: “come and see”.

Fifteenth Session: October 12 The Importance of Prayer in a Small Group

It is admitted that Africans are “notoriously religious” and prayer is a fundamental element of this religiosity. Some church members justify their visiting charismatic churches by arguing that Adventist Churches do not pray enough. People are facing a lot of challenges and need to cast their burdens on God. Therefore, enough room must be made for them relieve themselves. A small group where prayer is an essential component of the program will be attractive to its members. These prayers should take into consideration deliverance from demon-possession, protection against demoniac attacks, healing, and material prosperity. Forty-two people attended this session.

Sixteenth Session: October 14 The Importance of Vision and Evaluation

Vision is the functional objective statement of the group. It tells the group what is their *raison d'être*, what they would like their small group to look like. They were taught the three main functions of a vision. A vision breeds the members' commitment, it makes decision-making more objective, and it mobilizes the group's members. They were taught how to write the vision of their small group. They were encouraged to evaluate at the end of each meeting their small group and all members should be involved in this exercise. This evaluation will help them discover the weakness of the group vis-à-vis their objectives and correct what needs to be corrected. There were forty-nine attendees to this meeting.

Seventeenth Session: October 27 The Role of the Church Pastor in the Success of a Small Group Ministry

Six pastors participated in this session. They were four district pastors and two interns posted in Lomé. It was a session of exchange. An exposition was given on the subject. African worldview of the traditional priest was presented. In this worldview, the priest is regarded as the one who officiates as an intermediary between human being and divinities. He was considered to be the vicar of the divinity. This worldview is transposed into the church members' experience. The pastor's role in the success of small group ministry in seven points was presented to them.

1. The pastor must share publically his conviction in small group ministry
2. The pastor must preach a series of sermons on the biblical basis of small group ministry
3. The pastor must give time to small groups' members to share their experience with the church in order to encourage those who are not yet members of a small group.
4. The pastor should meet on a regular basis with the small groups' leaders to coach them, pray for them, pray for the group members, and to answer their challenges.
5. The pastor must train the small group members on visitation, leading people to Jesus, follow-up of new converts, and other soul-winning methods.
6. The pastor must assure the continuing education of the group leaders.
7. The pastor must visit each small group of his church. This constitutes an excellent means to be close to the members. Pastors are usually district leaders with so many congregations and it is quite impossible for them alone to visit members regularly.

The session ended with contributions from pastors present at this session.

Eighteenth Session: November 5 Discovery of Spiritual Gifts

Forty-seven members participated in this session. The youth department of the Mission conducted this exercise. Two Master-Guides were appointed for these gifts discovery exercise. The low number of the participants was due to the fact that many

said that they already knew their spiritual gifts. Nevertheless, those who participated in the session were excited to discover their gifts.

Nineteenth Session: November 12 Stressing on the Community Factor

This last session was held on Sabbath afternoon and was an opportunity to put stress on the community factor as the major element for an effective small group ministry. This was established through the study of Ephesians 4: 11 – 12.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”

The English word “perfecting” is the translation of the Greek word “*katartismos*”. Its verbal form “*katartizo*” is used in Matthew 4: 21 to indicate the action of repairing, or mending a fishing net.⁷ It was used in medical field to indicate the restoration of joints for a good functioning.⁸ (Translation, mine) Human relations must be restored among church members if they were to render an appropriate service to God.⁹ (Translation, mine) It should be always remembered that the ministry of the saint is tightly linked to the quality of the relations they have with one another. The edifying of the church depends on the community spirit which is lived out inside.

This session coincided with the end of the annually week of prayer and offered an excellent opportunity for the program launching. After a season of prayer, an appeal was made for those who wanted to be part of a small group. A second appeal

⁷ Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Standard*, Revised., vol. 6 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1989), 1023.

⁸ Anna Galeniece, ed., *Voyage À Travers La Bible* (Colmenar Viejo Madrid, Espagne: Editorial Safeliz, 2015), 284.

⁹ Ibid.

was made for those who were willing to house a small group. Six persons offered to house a small group. After that, those who answered favorably to be part of a small group were asked to choose voluntarily the place they wanted to be. A seventh group meet on the church compound. Efforts are being made to find a house for this small group.

The groups are made up respectively of 13, 13, 16, 15, 8, 5, and 9 persons. So seven small groups were formed and a consecration prayer was offered to God for their efficiency. Ninety-eight people were present at this final session. Sunday November 20 was the first meeting for all these seven groups. This first meeting consecrated to writing the group covenant a kind of regulations that will govern the life of the group.

Coaching Sessions, November 20 and 27

November 20 and 27 were consecrated for practical coaching in all the small groups constituted. The purpose was to help the group better understand and practice the fundamental principles of small group ministry. These coaching sessions was practical in their nature. This gave group members to ask questions in relation to the points of the training they do not understand very well. For example, in one of the group there was a dispute over the funding of the “Relief Fund”. Some were arguing that everybody who is expecting to benefit from this fund should at all cost, contribute to it. Explanations were given to them that if this is the basis of the “Relief Fund”, then it is no longer crafted after the Bible’s model for the principle underling this fund is the practice of the apostolic church where those who had helped those who have not. These coaching activities did not end with the official training. The purpose of this project went far beyond getting a degree but aims at making Kegue Church a pilot church as far as small group ministry is concerned.

Evaluation of the Program

Very few people are currently involved in small groups. But this is not discouraging. The emphasis was put on the fact that involvement in small groups should be voluntary and efforts should be being made to help those who are not part of them to understand the necessity for them to be involved.

A questionnaire in four points was distributed to the seven small groups for evaluation. The questions were intended to know what in the training, helped them have a better understanding of small group ministry, why, in their opinion, the spirit of community is at the heart of an effective small group ministry, what were the points in the training they deemed useful to the prosperity of their small groups, and finally, what was their perception of small group ministry after the program?

With regard to the first point, the general answer is that the clear biblical basis of this ministry, the fundamental role of small group life in the cultivating brotherly relationship among church members, small groups being a frame for evangelism through simple methods especially the “Philip Method”, and the covenant bond constituted essentially things that helped them have a better understanding of small group ministry.

Concerning the second question, which reads: “in your opinion, why the spirit of community is at root of effective small group ministry, the unanimous answers was that human beings were originally created for community and that this was the strength and the success of the apostolic church in term of spiritual and numerical growth. That explained the reason why they are committed to do so.

In relation to the third question, what do you consider useful for the success of your small group, a crosschecking of the answers gives this:

1. The stress on community as the main objective and the first means for an effective

small group ministry

2. The small group programs should not be a duplication of the church prayer meetings schedule.
3. The point that a small group is a small church and such, in consultation with the church leaders, the Lord's Supper can be celebrated in the small group as a means to strengthen the brotherly bonds among the group members and also as a practical way of evangelism.
4. The institution of a small group's Sabbath in the church
5. The possibility to have studies that are not necessarily directly related to spiritual domains.
6. The constitution of a "Relief Fund" to support morally and financially group members who are tried
7. The group leaders' training
8. The biblical way of conflict management
9. The pastor's involvement in the life of the small group

Finally, with regard to the fourth question, what is your new perception of small group ministry, it is said that from now on, they considered small group ministry as a biblical ministry and they were comfortable to practice it. It is also said that from this program, small group ministry was no longer an option but a necessity if the church should be strong. Small group is the best way of evangelizing friends, family members, and neighbors.

Project Report

This project would be reported to Togo Mission which would become Togo Conference during the first week of the year 2017 for an action to be taken to make it a model for training churches with regard to small group ministry program.

Closing Remarks

Strategy implementation is crucial to any project. However, implementing a strategy is even more important than just having one. The purpose of this chapter was

to implement in Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church the fourteen-point strategy designed in chapter 4. A sufficient time was allotted to the implementation of this strategy. In total there were nineteen sessions for training and two coaching sessions. The time spent for this strategy implementation gave to the researcher opportunity to be acquainted with Kegue Church members.

At the end of this time period, a particular brotherly bond was created between him and church members. It was a wonderful occasion to live out the community life which is at the root of any effective small ministry. Soon after the launching of the project, a church member, a sister died. It was December 5. The burial ceremonies took place a week later December 10 and 11. People who attended these ceremonies testified of the community bonds that were visible among church members. A former Muslim converted to Christianity approached the researcher who conducted the ceremonies for information about the church.

Testimonies were given by non-Adventist members of the bereaved family about the brotherly love shown by the church. It is true that only a small number of church members is currently enrolled in small groups, but one thing can be seen: the commitment of the church to live, better than before, a Christian community life. It is hoped that the testimonies of these seven small groups would revolutionize this ministry in Kegue Church .

Another important remark is that the church pastor involvement in this ministry is crucial for its effectiveness. This is clear from the researcher's own experience during his coaching sessions with the various groups. Any time the group members met him, there were always questions for clarification on issues of interest or suggestions and ideas shared. The little time spent in visiting the small groups helped create a strong friendly relationship between the church and the researcher.

They looked at him as their local pastor. From the researcher's observations, small group ministry in Kegue Church is promising. It may take more time and more perseverance on the part of the church leaders but at the end, this church will become a model of this ministry in the whole Conference. This is the researcher's hearty wishes.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Summary

The purpose of this project was to design and implement a strategy for an effective small group ministry to foster discipleship in Kegue Seventh-day Adventist Church. Since the strategy meant to accomplish the divine mandate—making disciples of all nations, it must be rooted in God’s Word. Therefore, the Scriptures were studied to lay a biblical foundation of the project. This study led to the conclusion that small group ministry derives from God and is strongly supported by Christian theology.

The very nature of God is a divine model of human small group. Adam and Eve constituted the first human small group. In both Old and New Testament as well as in the Ellen G. White’s Writings, small groups are presented as means for community, group management, and evangelistic ministry. A review of literature showed the ever-increasing interest for small group ministry as an effective tool as far as fulfilling Christ’s Mandate is concerned. The Scripture as well as Christian literature revealed that small group ministry is an effective means for discipleship. In chapter four, a questionnaire was administered to a population of eighty-two members of Kegue Church selected through a non-random sampling technique which included all available church members as representatives of the whole congregation. The data collected was revelator of the perception of this church about small group ministry. After an analysis of these data, a fourteen-point strategy was designed based on the

results of this data analysis, the theological foundation of the study, and the review of literature on small groups. After a careful preparation, the whole strategy was implemented during nineteenth training sessions and two coaching visitations. An evaluation was done which proved the efficiency of the whole program. This project would in due time be reported to the Conference to be a model for training churches in small group ministry. Chapter four ended with some closing remarks.

Recommendations

1. The church in Togo is in majority youth. This youth, constitute not only the future of the church, but also its leadership. In order to strengthen small group ministry in the church tomorrow, a special attention should be paid to small group ministry as far as the youth training curriculum is concerned. They should be taught African value of community which is the basic element of Christian small groups.
2. Scripture recommend to “train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it”. (Prov 22: 6) Children Ministry also must make small group ministry a vital part of its program. The biblical foundation of this ministry should be inculcated to this segment of the church while they are still teachable. They should also be taught that small groups is rooted in African tradition and constitute a biblical value to promote in God’s church.
3. Women Ministry hold frequently congresses. Unfortunately, small group ministry has hardly been a module of their program. The researcher strongly recommend to the Mission to introduce training session in small group ministry in every Women Ministry program. A special attention should be paid to this ministry during women congresses, retreats and any other activities.
4. A small groups’ day should be strongly recommended for all churches to promote this ministry. Having such a day for all the church when existing small groups will be given opportunity to share their faith building experiences will undoubtedly encourage church members who are not involved in any small group program to feel like doing it.
5. Efforts in training church members in small group ministry should be part of the criteria of evaluating pastors. The Mission should initiate incentive ways to encourage pastors to be committed to this God-inspired ministry.
6. Any training program in small group ministry should be just a “copy and paste” of a foreign model. Rather, it should take into consideration African cultures and values for a contextualized discipleship process.

Lessons Learned

This project was quite a new school for the researcher. Many lessons have been learned through its implementation.

1. With regard to the type of research and the instrument used for the survey of the research population, the researcher has learned an important lesson. The qualitative research is more fitting for surveying a church population in Africa. Africans generally are best at orality than writing and an oral survey method will allow a bigger portion of the church to be involved in the surveying process than they will with a quantitative survey questionnaire. For the majority of church member who are illiterates, a quantitative questionnaire is meant for the literate layer of the church population. Instead of suggesting answers through quantitative questionnaire, survey through focus groups and interviews would allow them to express their real thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and perceptions. Probably, the research population (82) might be much more if qualitative instruments were used. More people would have participated in the survey because Africans love to talk when they are given room to.
2. Another lesson the researcher has learned through this program is that patience, perseverance, and determination are needed if small group ministry were to succeed. It should never be expected that just after the program, all will enroll in small groups. This consciousness will help keep on teaching, mentoring, coaching the church on this ministry so important to the Mission of the church. The principle to be followed here is the principle of leaven taught by Jesus in Matthew 13, verse 33. The few small groups formed as the immediate result of the project should be considered as “a leaven hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.” The effectiveness of these seven small groups will help, through their testimonies about God’s interventions in their midst, will incite those who are not yet involved to do it.
3. I have learned another lesson. Everything that is done in the church for the purpose of the Mission should be rooted in the Scripture. The members will be willing to abide by the methods that they are asked to follow if they see that these methods are biblical. This was observed through the evaluation they did regarding the program. Unanimously, they said that one of the things they appreciate in the training is that everything they were taught derives from the bible. They observed that teachings like visiting one another, bearing the burdens of one another, the relief fund whose contribution is voluntary proceeding from the brotherly love which binds them together, spirit of community as the heart of small group ministry are all based on the Word of God.
4. Another lesson learned through the program is the personal joy experienced by the one who practices community. Practical community is experiencing the likeness with God who is by essence love.
5. The researcher has also learned the importance of coaching in an effective small group ministry, hence the vital role of the church pastor in this ministry. It is in coaching sessions that direction are given, rectifications are done, and important

questions and preoccupations are answered.

6. Finally, the researcher is conscious of his gift of sympathy for which he is so thankful to God who has endowed His children with all kinds of spiritual gifts for His own glory and also for their salvation. This project help him in a great measure develop this gift. It was obvious to him during the decease of a sister of a small group during the coaching sessions. There is today a strong Christian love bond uniting him to the widower and the children and this is, from the own confession of the widower, a great encouragement to the entire family.

Final Conclusion

The ultimate purpose of small group ministry is to make disciples. This purpose is fulfilled through inreach and outreach evangelism. For small groups to be places where these two types of evangelism are successfully implemented, they must be places governed by a genuine atmosphere of community.

This fundamental truth is plainly taught in the New Testament where the Church was made of home churches. It is obvious that the power of these home churches for building members' faith and for reaching out for others resided in the Christian bonds which tied them both one to another and to their Savior. Living out the one another commandments given by Jesus and also by Paul could but strengthened this community atmosphere of theses home churches. This Christian community was fundamental for these home churches to thrive and multiply and so it must be for today church.

When this Christian brotherly community is guaranteed in small groups, when it is demonstrated through tangible actions of love and caring, then they create an environment for inreach and outreach evangelism. All activities performed in such small groups become relevant to members. There must be a contextualization of the way small group ministry is practiced in the church in Africa. The program of the small groups should seek to address the fundamental needs of their members. A significant time should be allotted for prayer because Africans are "notoriously

religious” (John Mbiti). Their material needs should not be overlooked. These needs should be made prayer points during prayer sessions showing that the whole group is interested in each one’s problems. They should be given the assurance that God cares for their life here and hereafter.

The researcher has been intensely blessed by this project from its start to its conclusion. His conviction in small group ministry as a divine-ordained instrument for discipleship has greatly increased. His perception of Christian community has been enriched in a great measure. In his opinion, the Church needs above everything to create community through small groups for inreach and outreach evangelism. In spite of all the challenges faced, it is a relief to have finally this program implemented.

The researcher was working from several battle fronts. As the first executive administrator, he was carrying the heavy burden of leading the Mission to a conference status. He chose not to sacrifice his responsibilities as Administrator to his study project. This explains mainly the delay in completing this program.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
CORRESPONDENCE



EGLISE
ADVENTISTE
DU SEPTIEME JOUR

MISSION AU
TOGO

Lomé, December 18, 2015

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Pastor Eric F. MESSANVI
Secretary Executive
Togo Mission

To
Semenu K. AMEGAN
Pastor
Togo Mission

Subject: Authorization to conduct a Project Research in Kégué SDA Church

Dear Sir,

With reference to your request, I am delighted to inform you officially that by the action MTGCOM 15-189 of December 17, 2015 the executive committee granted your request.

Thank you.
Yours faithfully



APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Adventist University of Africa

STRATEGY FOR SURVEYING KEGUE CHURCH MEMBERS

Dear Respondent, this questionnaire aims at collecting opinions about small group ministries in the Seventh-day Church. The ultimate purpose of the research is to help the Church maximize the benefits of small group ministries in order to improve Christian witnessing. You are therefore entreated to share your candid opinion as a valuable contribution to the said ultimate purpose of the research. Kindly use the scale for each section of the questionnaire to express the degree or intensity of your opinion.

To what extent are the following statements true?						
A	1: Not at all True; 2: Not True; 3: Somehow True; 4: True; 5: Very True	1	2	3	4	5
a 1	I have heard of small ministry in my church					
a 2	Church leaders have taken time to teach and explain to the church what small group ministry is					
a 3	I know clearly what small group ministry is all about					
a 4	There was a time my church was organized into small groups					
a 5	Church leadership have been running periodic workshops on small group ministries					
a 6	I once was a member of a small group in the church					
a 7	I currently belong to an active small group ministry					
How are the following benefits likely to result from small group ministries?						
B	1: Not at all likely; 2: Not likely; 3: Somewhat likely; 4: Likely; 5: Very Likely	1	2	3	4	5
b 1	Individual spiritual growth					
b 2	Numerical growth of the church					
b 3	Financial growth of the church					
b 4	Unity among believers					
b 5	Greater impact on the community					
b 6	Greater and faster revival					
How are the following challenges likely to have affected small group ministries in your church?						
C	1: Very Unlikely; 2: Unlikely; 3: Somewhat Likely; 4: Likely; 5: Very Likely	1	2	3	4	5

c 1	Lack of training for church members					
c 2	Wrong methods of putting people into small groups					
c 3	Lack of study materials for small group ministries					
c 4	Sinful practices prevailing in the church					
c 5	Antagonism from the communities around the church					
c 6	Many competing programs in the church					
c 7	Lack of practical demonstration of how a small group functions					
c 8	Conflict among small group members					
c 9	Lack of dedication among church leaders					
c 10	Conflict among church leaders					
c 11	Lack of gifted leaders in the church					
c 12	Lack of understanding of the concept of small group ministries					
D	How would you recommend the following activities to revive small group ministries in your church?					
	<i>1: Not at all recommended; 2: Not recommended; 3: Somewhat recommended; 4: Recommended; 5: Highly recommended</i>	1	2	3	4	5
d 1	Organizing workshops for the whole church					
d 2	Training group leaders					
d 3	Pastor to form small group committee					
d 4	Pastor to visit small groups					
d 5	Allowing the church to decide how groups are formed					
d 6	Allowing individuals to form groups according to their affinities					
d 7	Forming groups according to age groups					
d 8	Forming group according to place of residence					
d 9	Setting small group days on the church's calendar					
d 10	Dedicating a whole quarter of Sunday Bible study to small group ministry					
E	About Yourself (Please tick)					
	<i>Please underline or write depending on the nature of the information needed</i>					
e 1	Gender Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>					
e 2	Your Age group (11-15; 16-20; 21-25; 26-30; 31-35; 36-40; 41-45; 46-50; Above 50)					

e 3	Number of years you have spent in the church (-----)					
e 4	Your current Church membership status Just a worshiper Baptismal class Baptized					
e 5	Your current role in the church No role ; Sabbath School Teacher ; Departmental leader Elder ; Singer ; Deacon/Deaconess; Departmental Secretary ; Departmental Assistant ; Other :.....					
e 6	Your greatest spiritual gift: Music ; Preaching ; Giving ; Helping ; Prayer ; Visitation Teaching Counseling ; Administration Prophecy ; Speaking in different languages Interpretation of languages					
e 7	Your preferred function in the church Deaconry ; Teaching ; Leading programs ; Singing ; Visitation Organizing ; Planning ; Preaching					
e 8	Your most cherished program in the church Youth programs ; Sabbath School ; Social activities ; Visitation ; Musical concert ; Sermons ; Dorcas ; Men's Programs ; Women's programs Birthdays ; Literature evangelism					
e 9	Your least cherished program in the church Youth programs ; Sabbath School ; Social activities ; Visitation ; Musical concert ; Sermons ; Dorcas ; Men's Programs ; Women's programs Birthdays ; Literature evangelism					
e 10	What makes you feel like staying in the church The truth taught ; Social activities and care in the church ; Love in the church The whole of my family are SDAs ; My friends are SDAs ; I don't want people to laugh at me when I leave Some people's good influence on me The church helps me handle my conflict with people I feel forgiven in the church					
e 11	What makes you sometimes feel like leaving the church The truth taught ; Social activities and care in the church ; Love in the church The whole of my family are SDAs ; My friends are SDAs ; I don't want people to laugh at me when I leave Some people's good influence on me The church helps me handle my conflict with people I feel forgiven in the church					
	Thank you for sharing your opinion					



APPENDIX C

JESUS' NEW COMMANDMENTS

I. JESUS' NEW COMMANDMENTS

a. LOVE YOU ONE ANOTHER ONE ANOTHER :

b. John 13 :34, 35 ; 15 : 12, 17 ; 1 John 3 : 11, 23 ; 4 : 7, 11,12 ; 2 John 1: 5;
Rom 13: 8; 1 Thess 3: 12; 4: 9; 1 Pet 1: 22; 1 Pet 4: 8

HOW THIS NEW COMMANDMENT IS LIVED OUT ?

II. THINGS THAT SHOULD NOT BE DONE TO ONE ANOTHER

1. Rom. 14 :13 Do not judge one another

2. 1 Cor. 6 : 7 Do not sue one another

3. Ga. 5 : 15 Do not destroy one another

4. Ga. 5 : 26 Do not provoke one another

5. Col. 3 : 9 Do not lie to one another

6. Ja. 4 : 11 do not speak evil of one another

7. Ja. 5 : 9 Do not murmur against one another

III. THINGS THAT SHOULD NOT BE DONE TO ONE ANOTHER

1- 1Cor. 12: 25 Caring for one another

2- Rom 12: 10 Showing affection to one another

3- Rom 12: 16 ; Rom 15: 5 Being of the same mind towards one another

4- Rom 15: 7 Receiving one another as Christ did towards us

5- Rom 15: 14; Col 3: 16; He 3: 13; He 10: 25 Comforting one another

6- Rom 16: 16; 1 Cor 16: 20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1Pe 5: 14 Greeting one another with a holy kiss

7- Gal 5: 13 Being servants to one another by love

8- Ga. 6: 2 Bearing the burdens of one another

9- Ep 4: 2; Col 3: 13 Forbearing with one another

10- Ep 4: 25; Col 3: 9 Speaking truth to one another

11- Ep 4: 32; Rom 12: 10 Being kind to one another

12- Ep 4: 32; Col 3: 13 Forgiving one another

13- Ep 5: 21; 1 Pie 5: 5; Jean 13: 14 Being submitted to one another

14- 1Thes 4: 18; 5: 11 Comforting one another

15- 1 Thess. 5: 11 Edifying one another

16- He. 10: 24 Considering one another

17- Ja. 5: 16 Confessing faults to one another

18- Ja. 5: 16 Praying for one another

19- 1 Pet. 3: 8 Being courteous to one another

20- 1 Pet. 4: 9 Practicing hospitality towards one another

21- 1 Pet. 4: 10 Using spiritual gifts to minister to one another

22- 1 John 1: 7 Being in fellowship with one another

IV. BENEFICES FOR A CHURCH WHICH PRACTICES JESUS' NEW COMMANDMENT

Acts 2:47" Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved."

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