

## PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Divinity

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: MENTORING YOUTH FOR SPIRITUALITY: CASE STUDY OF KIGOMBE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, RWANDA

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This qualitative action research examined the factors hindering youth spiritual involvement in the Kigombe Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Rwanda.

Through interviews with thirty-five participants, including youth members and church leaders, ten major barriers were identified: deficiency of training, lack of effective programs, insufficient Adventist Youth Ministries materials, shortage of teachers, poor leadership, lack of monitoring and encouragement, generational conflict, peer pressure, and an inferiority complex. These challenges reflect both organizational and social issues that limit youth participation and spiritual growth within the church.

To address these challenges, an eight-phased intervention program was implemented. The program included translating and adapting church curricula, training leaders and teachers, forming age-based youth classes, and promoting

experiential learning through community service and spiritual emphasis programs. The intervention significantly enhanced youth engagement and leadership capacity, demonstrating that intentional mentorship and structured training are vital to revitalizing youth spirituality and strengthening the mission of the Kigombe SDA Church.

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CASE STUDY OF KIGOMBE SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH, RWANDA

A project

presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

Master of Divinity

by

Esdras Mupenzi Gashengeshi

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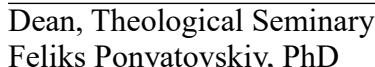
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To my beloved wife, whose unwavering love, patience, and support gave me the strength to persevere. To my children, who are my greatest source of joy and inspiration, and whose smiles remind me of why this journey matters. And to the dedicated leaders who work tirelessly, day and night, to mentor the youth toward a brighter future.

This work is as much yours as it is mine.

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To each of you, I extend my sincere appreciation.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the study**

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church recognizes the importance of having young people who are dedicated to their spiritual lives. The way they experience and live out their religion is vital to it, since they are likewise concerned with helping to spread the three angels' messages.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, youth encounter challenges that undermine their dedication to spirituality.

In recent years, Rwanda has witnessed a noticeable pattern of sporadic church involvement among its youth population. This trend, characterized by short periods of religious participation followed by gradual disengagement, highlights a growing concern. It prompts important questions about how young people relate to religious institutions in a post-genocide against Tutsi in 1994, which is rapidly modernizing.

Several factors contribute to this intermittent pattern of engagement. Primarily, the changing sociocultural landscape has reshaped how youth perceive organized religion. In a context where over 90% of the population identifies as Christian,<sup>2</sup> religious affiliation remains strong on paper, yet actual participation particularly among youth is increasingly inconsistent. Young people often enter into church activities due to parental influence or community expectations during early

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 7.

<sup>2</sup> National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, *Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey 2020* (Kigali, Rwanda: NISR, 2021), 37.

adolescence. However, as they gain independence, many disengage, citing a perceived disconnect between the church's teachings and their lived realities.<sup>3</sup>

This disengagement is further influenced by the church's limited responsiveness to the specific developmental, emotional, and intellectual needs of youth. In many congregations, youth are excluded from decision-making roles and are often relegated to passive or symbolic functions within church services.<sup>4</sup> As a result, they may attend church sporadically, often for youth conferences, music programs, or special events, but lack sustained commitment to weekly worship or doctrinal instruction.

Moreover, the increasing availability of digital platforms and secular community spaces offers alternative avenues for identity formation and social interaction.<sup>5</sup> Many Rwandan youth now find mentorship, inspiration, and belonging in online communities, NGOs, or peer-led networks, which often feel more dynamic and responsive than traditional church structures. This competition for attention and allegiance weakens the church's hold. It is especially when it fails to innovate or speak to the pressing concerns of young people, such as unemployment, mental health, and civic engagement.

It is also important to consider that some youth engagement with the church reflects a broader cultural negotiation rather than outright rejection. Temporary involvement can signal a transitional phase, wherein individuals explore various

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<sup>3</sup> Innocent Nkurunziza, "Youth Religious Disengagement in Rwanda: A Social-Ecclesial Perspective," *Rwandan Journal of Religion and Society* 4, no. 1 (2022): 56-59.

<sup>4</sup> Béatrice Umuhoza, "Faith and Leadership: The Role of Young People in Post-Genocide Church Reconstruction," *East African Theological Review* 38, no. 2 (2020): 22.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Paul Habimana, "Digital Discipleship? The Impact of Social Media on Rwandan Christian Youth," *Contemporary African Christianity* 6, no. 3 (2021): 77-80.

belief systems and institutional affiliations before settling into long-term commitments, religious or otherwise.<sup>6</sup> However, without intentional strategies from church leadership to engage, mentor, and empower youth, these temporary exits often become permanent.

Patterns of reduced spirituality and disengagement among youth are increasingly evident across various contexts, including at Kigombe SDA Church within the North Rwanda Field. An analysis of church membership statistics reveals a discernible decline in youth engagement within church-related activities. This tendency is notably reflected in the Kigombe SDA Church's end-of-year report for 2023. The report indicates that only a small proportion is actively involved in church programs.

Table 1 illustrates the trends in youth spiritual participation at Kigombe SDA Church from 2016 to 2023. The data reveal fluctuating levels of engagement across various spiritual and social dimensions which provide valuable insight into the changing dynamics of youth involvement in church life over the specified period.

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Karemera, "Spiritual Transitions: Patterns of Religious Engagement among Rwandan University Students," *African Journal of Youth Studies* 11, no. 2 (2023): 112.

*Table 1. Youth's Spiritual Trend between 2016 and 2023*

Indicators	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Attendance in SS groups	71%	68%	73%	60%	47%	30%	60%	55%
Mid-week prayer meeting	20%	20%	18%	5%	7%	9%	10%	9%
Tithe giving	28%	25%	23,5%	23%	4%	5%	29%	16%
Harvest ingathering	9,5%	8%	4%	2%	0,01%	1%	3%	2,8%
Youth week of prayer	45%	44%	39%	38%	19%	20%	24%	20%
Community services	16%	13%	10%	6%	18%	14%	8%	7,3%
Camping attendance	25%	20%	20,5%	18%	0	0	15%	9%
Organized international youth celebration days	60%	52%	52%	43%	0	0	35%	29%
Gospel music concert attendance	55%	60%	60%	68%	0	0	70%	87%
Distribution of Discovery lessons/Genzura	25%	21%	12%	6%	1%	2%	2%	1%
Daily Bible reading	21%	18%	15%	15%	12	10	8%	3%

Source: Kigombe SDA Church AYM Departmental Report (2026-2023)

Recent statistics point to a concerning trend of youth disengagement from active church life, raising critical questions about the long-term spiritual commitment of younger generations. This pattern, marked by declining participation and inconsistent involvement, appears to reflect a broader challenge facing many Seventh-day Adventist congregations. Kigombe SDA Church, located in the North Rwanda Field, is not immune to this reality. Addressing this issue is essential for the church's future vitality, as sustained youth engagement is crucial for spiritual continuity, leadership development, and the overall health of the faith community.

According to McGrath, faith-based spirituality can be identified by three factors. First, there needs to be a set of unique concepts (beliefs) that significantly contribute to creating the framework for how members should live. The second is ethical principles that define boundaries for behavior. Thirdly, it concerns the way of

living that creates a harmony between actual life and the two prior components, beliefs and values.<sup>7</sup>

The exploration of spiritual life deeply engages with individual experiences, prompting critical reflection on the various factors that influence how each spiritual being navigates their existence. This inquiry not only highlights the diverse examples of spiritual existence but also provides a framework for understanding the interplay between personal spirituality and broader ethical considerations.<sup>8</sup> May developed a comprehensive diagram that delineates four interconnected components of spiritual life.<sup>9</sup> This model illustrates how these aspects overlap and influence one another, providing a holistic view of the individual's spiritual experience. The diagram serves as a valuable tool for understanding the complexities of spiritual development and the interplay between various dimensions of life.

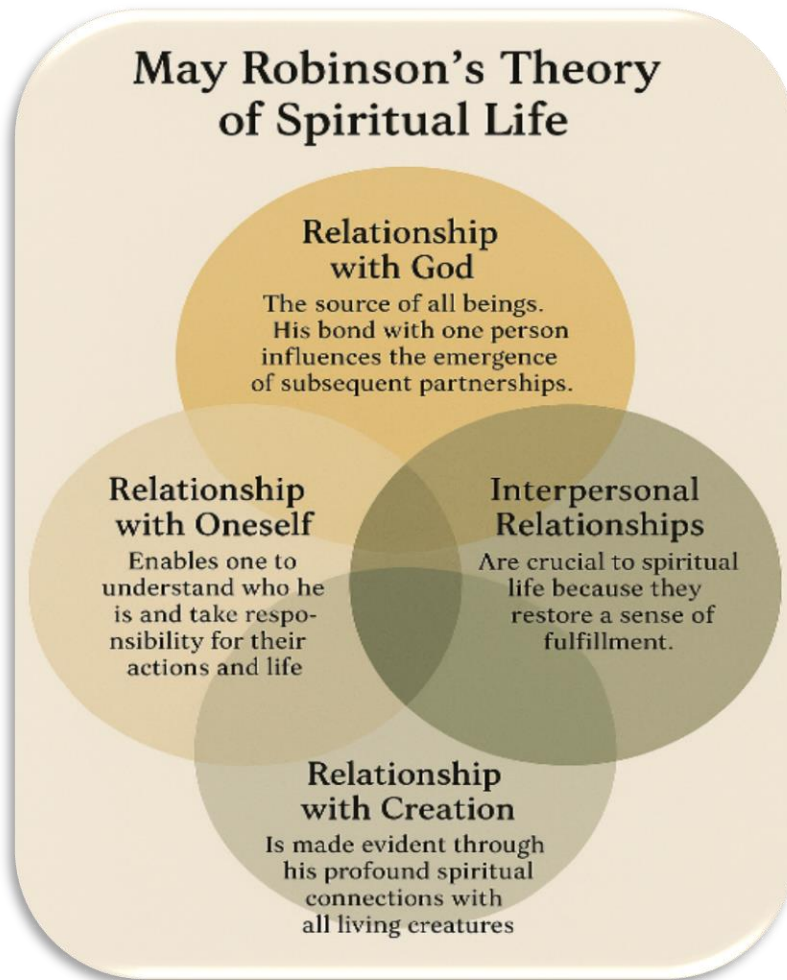
Figure 1 shows May Robinson's Theory of Spiritual Life, illustrating the interconnected relationships with God, oneself, others, and creation as essential dimensions that foster spiritual growth and fulfillment.

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<sup>7</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1999) 4.

<sup>8</sup> Roy H. May Jr. and William K. McElvaney, *Ethics and Spirituality: An Activity Book* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



*Figure 1.* May Robinson's Theory of Spiritual Life

Despite the post-modernism matters, the in-church reality handicaps the commitment to the participation of youth in the church's spiritual activities and even leads to abandoning it. The research done by the Barna Group describes six critical explanations for why nearly three in five young Christians (59%) leave church life after the age of 15, either permanently or for a significant amount of time. These are: churches appear to be overly protective. Second, the knowledge of Christianity among teenagers and young adults is limited. Third, churches seem to be opposed to science. Fourth, sexuality-related church encounters for young Christians are frequently

oversimplified and judgmental. Fifth, they struggle with Christianity's exclusivism. Sixth, those who have doubts don't feel welcome in the church.<sup>10</sup>

Churches across generations have recognized the vital role of spiritually committed youth in sustaining and advancing the mission of the faith community. For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, ensuring meaningful youth involvement remains a pressing concern both now and for the future. Despite their age, young people possess the potential to make significant contributions when actively engaged in church life. Their participation not only fosters spiritual growth and maturity but also equips them with the practical experience and leadership skills necessary for the church's long-term stability and effectiveness. Cultivating youth spirituality is, therefore, essential to building a resilient and mission-driven church in both the present and the years to come.

Accordingly, this research will focus on three key areas. First, it will analyze emerging trends in the attitudes and priorities of young people toward spirituality and church involvement, particularly in comparison to previous generations. Second, it will investigate the underlying factors contributing to the decline in spiritual commitment and the reduced participation of youth in church activities at Kigombe SDA Church. Finally, the study will examine fundamental biblical principles and values that are essential for nurturing and sustaining the spiritual life and active engagement of young people within the Kigombe Church community. These areas collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and possibilities surrounding youth involvement in the church today.

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<sup>10</sup> The Barna Group, "Six Reasons Young Christians Leave Church," posted September 27, 2011, accessed 10 January 2024, <https://www.barna.com/research/six-reasons-young-christians-leave-church/>.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The active mentoring and participation of young people in spiritual matters are vital to the growth, sustainability, and spiritual vitality of any church community. However, the Kigombe SDA Church is experiencing a significant decline in youth engagement and commitment to core spiritual and church-related activities. This decline is evident in the reduced participation of young members in essential practices such as regular prayer, meditation, scripture study, Bible conferences, evangelism, Holy Communion, tithing and offering returns, harvest ingathering, and youth-focused programs such as weeks of prayer.

The observed trend of declining youth involvement in church activities points to a deeper spiritual disconnection and waning interest in the life of the church. If not addressed, this erosion of spiritual commitment could significantly affect the future leadership, growth, and mission of the church. Despite its urgency, the underlying causes of this disengagement remain insufficiently understood, presenting a major challenge to church leaders and ministries focused on youth empowerment and spiritual development. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the root causes of declining spirituality and reduced church participation among the youth at Kigombe SDA Church. By identifying these factors, the research seeks to inform effective strategies for revitalizing the spiritual lives of young people and fostering their meaningful engagement in the mission of the church.

In response to this pressing issue, this study aims to explore and address the following key questions:

1. What factors contribute to the decline in spirituality and commitment to church activities among young people in the Kigombe SDA Church?

This part of the study will identify and analyze the internal and external

influences that contribute to the decline of spiritual commitment. It aims to deepen the understanding of various challenges encountered by young individuals in fostering and sustaining their spiritual development.

2. How have young people's attitudes and priorities toward spirituality and church involvement changed over time? By comparing different years, the study identifies trends in youth values and lifestyle choices. Showing how these shifting priorities differ from those of older generations and may affect their spiritual development and involvement in the church.

Subsequently, the findings will inform the development of a program tailored to address youth spiritual mentoring in alignment with contemporary needs and realities.

3. What biblical principles and values are essential for nurturing and sustaining the spirituality of young people within the Kigombe SDA Church?

Drawing upon scriptural teachings and the writings of the prophetic spirit, this section will identify foundational biblical values and principles that can effectively guide initiatives aimed at revitalizing youth spirituality.

These theological insights will underpin the formulation of practical strategies and programmatic interventions designed to foster meaningful spiritual development and active engagement of young people within the life and mission of the church.

Through a thorough exploration of these questions, this study seeks to explore the spiritual challenges facing young people in the Kigombe SDA Church. It aims to offer a clear understanding of the reasons behind their declining involvement. By examining key issues, the research will identify obstacles to sustained youth

participation. It will also propose practical, faith-based solutions to help restore their spiritual commitment. These insights are intended to support church leaders in developing effective strategies for youth engagement and growth.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the root causes behind the declining spirituality and church involvement among young people in the Kigombe SDA Church. Through a systematic investigation, the study aims to provide insights that will guide the development of effective strategies for revitalizing youth spiritual engagement and fostering a renewed dedication to God's work within the church. Ultimately, this research is intended to support the Kigombe SDA Church in designing and implementing spiritually enriching programs and initiatives that will inspire and sustain the faith of its young members. It will empower them to grow in their relationship with God and serve actively in His work.

### **The Significance of the Study**

This study is of great importance to the Kigombe SDA Church, especially in addressing the spiritual challenges affecting its youth. It explores the factors contributing to the decline in spiritual engagement among young people. Through this, the research seeks to deepen understanding of youth spirituality within the local church context. The findings are expected to benefit several key stakeholders. For the youth, the study provides an opportunity to reflect on their spiritual growth. By engaging with its programs and recommendations, they can strengthen their faith, renew their commitment to God, and take on active roles in church life. For church leaders, including pastors, elders, and youth ministry coordinators, the study offers practical insights for developing effective mentorship and spiritual growth initiatives.

These can be better tailored to the needs of today's young people. For the broader church community, the research contributes to long-term sustainability and vitality. A spiritually grounded and engaged youth is crucial for the future of the church's mission. Ultimately, this study aims to inspire a renewed spiritual purpose among the youth of Kigombe SDA Church and equip them to play a meaningful role in the life and growth of their faith community.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This research aims to provide a thorough exploration of mentoring young individuals in spiritual contexts; however, certain limitations must be acknowledged. A comprehensive understanding of the subject matter requires an in-depth investigation and considerable investment of time and resources. Due to these constraints, this essay will not encompass all facets of the broader topic. Instead, the focus will be directed specifically towards a case study of the Kigombe SDA Church, allowing for a more concentrated analysis within the defined scope of the research.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

The Kigombe SDA Church maintains comprehensive records of 433 individuals aged between 4 and 30 years, forming the research population for this study. The investigation will focus on a selected subset of individuals who exhibit specific characteristics, knowledge, and experiences pertinent to the study's objectives. Data collection will be conducted through interviews within the context of the Kigombe SDA Church. Given the multifaceted nature of the term "spirituality," this research will specifically emphasize the concept of Divine Spirituality, aiming to provide a nuanced understanding of its implications within the Kigombe SDA Church.

## Research Design

### Type of Research

The project being studied is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to initiate a program that will support the Kigombe SDA Church in providing spiritual mentorship to youth. The research to be done is qualitative, which means that it focuses on exploring and illustrating the decline of young people's spirituality and their lack of commitment to church activities. The trustworthiness of the qualitative approach lies in its ability to collect data through various sources, including documents, interviews, and observations.<sup>11</sup> According to Leavy, qualitative research is “a way of learning about social reality.”<sup>12</sup> The researcher uses the qualitative approach since it gathers trustworthy data on the social reality of youth spirituality. The research delves into the specific case of the Kigombe SDA Church.

As the study employs qualitative methods to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights related to the identified problem, subsequently, quantitative methods are applied during the following stage. This method intervenes during the analysis stage to measure responses, identify emerging patterns, and evaluate the potential effectiveness of the developed program. As Creswell emphasizes, integrating both qualitative and quantitative elements “provides a more complete understanding of research problems than either approach alone.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Safary Wa-Mbaleka et al., *Qualitative Research for Practical Theology* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2021), 160.

<sup>12</sup> Patricia Leavy, ed., “Introduction,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

<sup>13</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 4.

## **The Rationale for Selection**

A variety of Kigombe local church members will participate in the research. The researcher employs purposeful samples. People in purposeful samples are selected based on a specific characteristic to ensure a balanced representation of all groups.<sup>14</sup> The study involves interviewing thirty-five individuals from the Kigombe SDA Church. The interviewees include the district pastor, elders, women leaders, and youth members. Only those who have been members of the church for five years or more are eligible for the interview. The sample includes almost equal numbers of males and females, and individuals are from all age groups. The district pastor allowed the researcher to work on the project and guide him in selecting the interview subjects.

## **Instrumentation**

To proceed with the project at Kigombe SDA Church, the researcher secured permission from the district pastor and the North Rwanda Field Authority, as the project will significantly impact the church's participation and implementation. In doing that, constructing a compelling open letter requesting approval from these esteemed leaders is vital. As this project is included in the action research, the researcher collaborates with Kigombe SDA Church members while conducting the study. Brammer and Chapman describe action-research as an iterative process that involves research, action, and reflection. This process is led by a leader and includes the participation of others involved in the situation. Its purpose is to create positive change in an individual or a group, while also contributing to the development of

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<sup>14</sup> Scott W. VanderStoep and Deirdre D. Johnston, *Research Methods for Everyday Life: Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2009), 198.

theoretical knowledge.<sup>15</sup> After the biblical information and literature review have been done, a qualitative method through the interview protocol is necessary to guide the researcher “to do an in-depth interview.”<sup>16</sup> Open-ended questions regarding the views, experiences, and observations of interview subjects are included in this guide paper.

Briefly, the interview is a face-to-face question-and-answer process. These will help to gather qualitative information about the elements that lead to a decline in spirituality and disengagement from church-related activities. They also provide information about shifts or patterns in young people’s priorities and attitudes toward spirituality and church attendance. They finally help propose solutions to address the problem. With this in mind, the literature review is used to develop a mentorship program aligned with biblical principles.

### **Data Collection Methods**

The researcher served as the departmental director of the Kigombe SDA Church for five years (2011-2015). Currently, he holds the same position in the North Rwanda Field, which includes the aforementioned church. To ensure fairness, the interview process is designed with his observations in mind. Additionally, the interview protocol was designed in consideration of suggestions from the district pastor.

Before the interview, the researcher met with the participants, explained the purpose of the interview, and assured them of the confidentiality of their responses. A mutually convenient time for the meeting has been agreed upon for the personal interview. Participants are required to grant their consent within a week to facilitate

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<sup>15</sup> Wa-Mbaleka et al., *Qualitative Research for Practical Theology*, 78.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 141.

potential replacement before data collection begins. As all participants are Rwandans, the interview is conducted in Kinyarwanda, the country's primary language. No other member is selected for the interview, except from the Kigombe SDA Church.

### **Data Analysis**

Following the initial interview, data analysis is conducted. Hence, the preliminary analysis aids in identifying data-gathering problems and determining the direction and tactics for ongoing data collection. Furthermore, the researcher refined the inquiry strategy and direction following the initial interview to ensure the anticipated data is collected. All relevant data is carefully considered to establish a program for mentoring youth in spirituality at the Kigombe SDA Church. The researcher diligently preserved detailed records of all participants involved in the study. If there is a need for any new utilization or storage of the data, participants will be contacted to obtain their updated consent.

The research project is organized into six chapters, beginning with the Introduction in Chapter One, which outlines the background, purpose, and significance of the study. Chapter Two explores the biblical and theological foundations of spirituality, providing a scriptural and doctrinal basis for the study. Chapter Three presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature, offering insights from previous research and theoretical perspectives. In Chapter Four, the local context is examined, with a detailed description of Rwanda and the Kigombe SDA Church. Chapter Five focuses on the design, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed program. Finally, Chapter Six offers a conclusion, summarizing the findings and providing recommendations for future practice and research.

## Definition of Terms

*Mentoring:* Mentoring is defined as encouraging the growth of the one being mentored”<sup>17</sup> in the direction of his potential efficacy.

*Spirituality:* The word “Spirituality” is defined as the “quest for a fulfilled and authentic religious life, involving the bringing together of the ideas distinctive of that religion and the whole experience of living based on and within the scope of that religion.”<sup>18</sup> It has been defined as well as “the attitudes, beliefs, and practices that animate people’s lives and help them reach out towards supersensible realities.”<sup>19</sup>

*Youth:* The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible defines “youth as the time, with no fixed limit, beyond infancy, and before a person’s prime; a time of vigor and opportunity, though not of judgment and maturity.”<sup>20</sup> According to the Seventh-day Adventist church’s youth ministries program, youth are a distinct group of persons between the ages of 6 and 30.<sup>21</sup> The research relies on the SDA Church’s youth ministries program’s definition for the study’s objective.

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<sup>17</sup> Walter C. Wright, *Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2004), 39.

<sup>18</sup> McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Collin P. Thompson, “Spiritualism,” *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Gordon S. Wakefield (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1983), 361.

<sup>20</sup> S. H. Blank, “Youth,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 4:925.

<sup>21</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, revised 2015, 19th ed. (Hagerstown, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), 104.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The Bible provides a foundation for Spiritual mentoring for young people. Within the family and community, young people have a solid framework for fostering personal growth and nurturing a strong spiritual connection. The reserves of the stories, teachings, and wisdom offer valuable guidance and principles for cultivating a deeper understanding of faith and spirituality (Deut 6:4-9, KJV). This chapter elucidates a scriptural foundation for young people's spiritual mentoring. Moreover, works by Ellen White and other Christian authors are used to supplement further evidence.

#### **Biblical View of Spiritual Mentorship in Youth**

In ancient Israelite society, youth occupied a central place of concern within the family structure. The Hebrew Scriptures affirm that children were to be treated with love and care, as they represented a significant source of joy and fulfillment within the household (1 Sam 1:11, 19-20). Furthermore, as expressed in Psalms 127:3-5, the presence of children was often interpreted as a sign of God's favor and blessing upon a family.<sup>1</sup>

Mentoring youth in the Old Testament was deeply rooted in Israel's covenantal obligations. God commanded His people to ensure the faithful

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Uchechukwu Dickson, *Infant Nurturing - Necessity and Benefits - A Fresh Look at Proverbs 22:6* (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Positives Press, 2022), 1.

transmission of spiritual heritage and wisdom from one generation to the next. The family served as the primary context for this form of instruction and mentoring. As prescribed in the Shema, parents bore the responsibility of diligently teaching their children God's commandments in all aspects of daily life (Deut 6:4-7). This continuous and holistic approach to mentoring ensured that each generation would remain faithful to the covenant and uphold the values of the community.

The New Testament affirms the potential of young individuals to participate meaningfully in ministry, particularly when they receive appropriate mentorship. The Apostle Paul's relationship with Timothy exemplifies a holistic approach to mentoring that encompasses spiritual guidance, emotional support, and ministerial training. Paul's reference to Timothy as a "true son in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2) underscores the deeply personal and relational dimensions of this mentorship model. Timothy's subsequent leadership role in the church at Ephesus and his commission to instruct others (2 Tim 2:2) further illustrate the New Testament's emphasis on leadership development through intentional mentoring.

Furthermore, the spiritual mentoring observed in the families of Jesus and John the Baptist in the New Testament underscores the enduring significance of youth mentorship within the broader biblical narrative. Both families exemplified intentional spiritual formation from early childhood, rooted in covenantal faithfulness. Zechariah and Elizabeth raised John in a context of priestly devotion and obedience, preparing him for his prophetic mission (Luke 1:13-17, 76-80). Similarly, Mary and Joseph nurtured Jesus in an environment of piety, regularly bringing Him to the temple and fostering His growth in wisdom and favor before God and men (Luke 2:40, 46-52). These examples highlight that effective spiritual mentoring remains central to God's design for preparing youth to fulfill their divine callings.

The following section presents biblical teachings that offer the reader an insight into the spiritual upbringing of youth. It emphasizes how important it is for a community of faith and families to support and nurture young people's spiritual development and align them with God's will. Readers will likely be aware of how God was, is, and will remain curious about mentoring youth for spirituality for as long as the world lasts.

### **Mentoring Youth for Spirituality in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, the blessing of the family is correlated with the obligation to mentor children. God commanded Adam and Eve to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" after creating and blessing them (Gen 1:28). Ever since that day, the family has been instrumental in providing spiritual guidance and education for their offspring. In the days of patriarchy, schooling that was centered on the home was privileged.<sup>2</sup>

In the period of Samuel, another means for the spiritual education of youth came up. That is the so-called schools of the prophets (1 Sam 19:18-24, KJV). Samuel served as the head of the first officially recognized school, which was located in Ramah (v 20). These schools were open to young people who wished to delve deeper into the realities of God's word and seek wisdom from above. Samuel established the school of the prophets for 3 reasons. (1) To act as a checker on the pervasive corruption. (2) To provide for the moral and spiritual well-being of the youth. And (3) to advance the nation's future prosperity by supplying it with men who are capable

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<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *True Education: Adaptation of Education by Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 23.

of leading and counseling others in the fear of God.<sup>3</sup> More than anything else, spiritual development was the focus of these schools. This is the way that a devotional spirit was valued. In addition to learning the importance of prayer, children also learned how to approach their Creator, how to put their faith in Him, and how to comprehend and follow the guidance of His Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

From the preceding discussions, the Old Testament highlights the family's role in spiritual mentoring, while Samuel's schools of the prophets show the need for organized spiritual education to guide youth and prepare future leaders.

### **Solomon's Instructions to "My Son" in Proverbs 1:8**

The book of Proverbs opens with a series of didactic poems framed as paternal instructions: "*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother*" (Prov 1:8, KJV). These exhortations, traditionally attributed to Solomon, establish a pedagogical relationship wherein the king serves as both father and sage. The repeated address to "my son" (e.g. Prov 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1) signals the centrality of intergenerational transmission of wisdom in Israel's moral tradition and reflects a theological anthropology grounded in the formation of character.

Scholars such as Bruce K. Waltke argue that the formulaic address to "my son" functions rhetorically to personalize instruction while reinforcing the covenantal responsibility of parents to educate their children in the fear of the Lord.<sup>5</sup> In this light, Solomon's role transcends biological fatherhood to encompass a royal and spiritual

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<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 593.

<sup>4</sup> White, *True Education*, 32-33.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 181-183.

tutelage. The paternal voice in Proverbs is thus both literal and symbolic, representing the broader communal duty to mentor youth in ethical discernment.

The content of these paternal instructions focuses on virtues such as prudence, discipline, humility, and the fear of Yahweh. Tremper Longman III notes that the fear of the Lord (Prov 1:7) operates as the “foundation of wisdom,” framing the entire instruction corpus with theological urgency.<sup>6</sup> Solomon’s teachings are not presented as mere moral advice but as covenantal imperatives that align with divine order. Proverbs 3:5-6 for example, instructs the son to “trust in the Lord with all your heart,” placing relational dependence on God at the center of a wise life.

Moreover, the structure of Proverbs 1-9 reveals a carefully crafted literary unit, where Solomon contrasts the voice of wisdom with competing voices namely, the enticement of sinners (Prov 1:10), the seduction of the adulteress (Prov 5,7), and the folly of arrogance (Prov 6:16-19). Michael V. Fox observes that these contrasting voices illustrate the moral landscape that the son must navigate, making paternal instruction a compass in a world of competing values.<sup>7</sup>

Importantly, the use of “father” and “mother” in Proverbs 1:8 underscores the holistic view of family education. Christine Roy Yoder emphasizes that wisdom formation was not solely a paternal duty but involved the integrated teaching of both parents, highlighting the mother’s voice as equally formative in moral instruction.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Tremper III Longman, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 95-96.

<sup>7</sup> Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible 18A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 153-156.

<sup>8</sup> Christine Roy Yoder, “Proverbs,” *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed., ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 232-242.

This dual involvement elevates the domestic sphere as the primary venue for ethical and spiritual formation in ancient Israel.

In sum, Solomon’s instructions to his “son” in Proverbs serve as a foundational model of biblical mentoring. Rooted in covenant theology, framed within royal pedagogy, and situated in the familial context, these instructions emphasize the lifelong impact of early moral and spiritual formation.

### **Biblical Characters Affected by the Absence of Effective Family Spiritual Mentorship**

Throughout the Old Testament, the family unit serves as the foundational context for spiritual formation, moral development, and leadership preparation. The covenantal mandate given to Israel emphasized the responsibility of parents to instruct their children diligently in the ways of the Lord (Deut 6:4-9). However, the biblical narrative also records instances where this responsibility was neglected or imperfectly carried out, resulting in profound consequences for individuals and communities. The absence or failure of effective family spiritual mentorship often contributed to moral failures, leadership crises, and spiritual decline. This section will examine selected biblical characters whose lives were significantly impacted by the lack of proper parental guidance and spiritual formation within the family context.

#### **Antediluvian Experience: The Sons of God versus the Daughters of Men**

Genesis 6 provides significant insight into the role of antediluvian families in shaping the spiritual character of their descendants. The passage introduces the categories of the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” (Gen 6:1-2, KJV). These verses suggest that family environments exerted a formative influence on the moral and spiritual development of individuals. The distinction between the “sons of God”

and the “daughters of men” appears to reflect differing familial and religious heritages.

In this interpretive framework, the “sons of God” are commonly understood to be the male descendants of Seth, those who maintained fidelity to God and preserved authentic worship practices (cf. Gen 5).<sup>9</sup> These individuals represent the lineage through which the knowledge of God was preserved, as indicated earlier in Genesis where it is said, “then began men to call upon the name of the Lord” (Gen 4:26). Conversely, the “daughters of men” are interpreted as women from the line of Cain, a genealogy marked by spiritual decline and moral corruption (Gen 4:17-24). These women did not participate in or perpetuate the worship of the true God.<sup>10</sup>

The intermarriage between the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain is portrayed as a catalyst for spiritual degradation, contributing to a broader decline in human morality. This union blurred the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, ultimately provoking divine displeasure. The narrative concludes with God’s judgment upon a corrupted humanity, culminating in the decision to destroy the earth by a flood (Gen 6:5-7). Thus, the passage underscores the theological significance of familial faithfulness and its broader implications for the spiritual state of society.

### **Eli’s Sons**

The biblical narrative in 1 Sam 2 and 3 presents a critical evaluation of the parenting of Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, whose misconduct is portrayed as a pivotal cause of corruption within the priestly establishment. The failure of Eli, the high priest and judge of Israel, to properly discipline and correct his sons represents a

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<sup>9</sup> “The Sons of God” [Gen 6:2], *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. ed. Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing, 1976), 1:250.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

significant lapse in family mentorship and leadership. It ultimately brought the divine judgment upon his household.

The sons of Eli are depicted as engaging in egregious abuses of their priestly office, including the desecration of sacrificial offerings and sexual misconduct with women serving at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting (1 Sam 2:12-17, 22-25). This behavior not only undermined the sanctity of the priesthood but also sowed discord and disillusionment among the people of Israel. As noted by biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann, Eli's sons embody a failure of moral and spiritual leadership, highlighting how personal sin within family structures can have broader religious and societal consequences.<sup>11</sup>

Eli's response to his sons' transgressions illustrates a troubling parental inadequacy. Although he rebukes them verbally (1 Sam 2:23-25), the text emphasizes his inability or unwillingness to impose effective discipline or remove them from power. This ineffective parenting is further underscored in the prophetic oracle delivered by a man of God (1 Sam 2:27-36). It foretold the downfall of Eli's house due to the persistent sins of his sons. As Gordon Wenham explains, Eli's failure to restrain his sons reflects a broader theme in the Deuteronomistic history concerning the responsibilities of leaders to maintain covenant fidelity and ethical conduct.<sup>12</sup>

Scholars like Robert Alter have also highlighted the literary dimension of this family failure. The narrative not only serves as a historical account but also as a

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<sup>11</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 35-38.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 8 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 44-47.

theological critique of leadership and parental responsibility in Israel.<sup>13</sup> The sons' moral corruption and Eli's ineffective parenting are contrasted with the faithful calling of Samuel, marking a transition from flawed hereditary leadership to prophetic legitimacy.

In sum, the biblical portrayal of Eli's family reveals a breakdown in proper family mentoring and discipline. Eli's inability to correct his sons' sinful behavior not only precipitated personal and familial tragedy but also led to a crisis in Israel's religious life. The narrative serves as a cautionary tale underscoring the vital importance of responsible parenting and ethical leadership within both family and community contexts.

### **Lot's Daughters**

The story of Lot and his daughters in Genesis 19 presents a deeply troubling picture of family dynamics shaped by moral ambiguity, cultural dislocation, and parental failure. While much scholarly focus has traditionally centered on the destruction of Sodom, the subsequent actions of Lot's daughters engaging in incest to preserve offspring invite critical reflection on the ethical implications.

Lot's decision to offer his daughters to the mob in Sodom (Gen 19:8) is the first significant indicator of his compromised parental leadership. Although intended as a gesture of hospitality to his angelic guests, the act reveals a profound moral failure, prioritizing cultural norms over the safety and dignity of his children. Lot's

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 12-15

attempt to appease violent men by sacrificing his daughters suggests that his moral compass had already been corrupted by prolonged immersion in Sodomite culture.<sup>14</sup>

Further, after fleeing Sodom and settling in a cave near Zoar (Gen 19:30), Lot's detachment and passivity set the stage for the daughters' incestuous scheme. Their decision to intoxicate their father and engage in sexual relations with him (Gen 19:31-36) reflects not only desperation but also a profound breakdown in familial communication and ethical formation. Victor Hamilton suggests that this episode, while disturbing, is portrayed with narrative restraint to highlight the far-reaching consequences of moral compromise within the family unit.<sup>15</sup>

The lack of proper family mentoring is evident in Lot's inability to instill trust, guidance, or hope in his daughters. His failure to interpret and guide the traumatic experience of Sodom's destruction, and the absence of maternal influence (as Lot's wife had perished), left his daughters isolated in both physical and ethical terms. As J. Cheryl Exum argues, the incest narrative analyzes not only individual behavior but also the entire collapse of patriarchal authority and responsibility.<sup>16</sup> The outcome of giving birth to Moab and Ben-Ammi, ancestors of Israel's later enemies, serves as a theological commentary on the generational consequences of familial dysfunction and parental neglect.

In brief, the actions of Lot's daughters cannot be divorced from the context of failed parental guidance. Lot's moral failures, his compromised leadership, and his

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<sup>14</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 281-283.

<sup>15</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18-50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 45-48.

<sup>16</sup> J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 164-165.

neglect of protective and ethical instruction allowed for a situation where desperate and deviant actions were conceived as legitimate. The account thus serves as a sobering reflection on the profound impact of parental influence in shaping moral choices, particularly during times of crisis.

### **Characters from the Old Testament Who Benefited from Early Spiritual Guidance**

The Old Testament records numerous individuals who have profited from their spiritual guidance since they were children. Some characters that profited greatly from family and community mentoring will be briefly discussed in the ensuing subsections. They are Daniel and his companions, Joseph, Naaman's servant girl, and David.

#### **Joseph**

The scriptural tale of Joseph (Gen 37-50) provides a rich case study for spiritual mentoring within a covenantal family structure. Joseph's spiritual development was shaped early by the influence of his father, Jacob, who transmitted the covenantal faith he inherited from his ancestors. As Bruce K. Waltke observes, Jacob's retelling of God's promises to Abraham and Isaac would have provided Joseph with a robust understanding of God's providential rule over history.<sup>17</sup> This early instruction laid a foundation that would guide Joseph throughout the many trials he faced.

Joseph's response to temptation in Egypt is particularly indicative of his internalized spiritual formation. In resisting Potiphar's wife, Joseph does not appeal merely to social or personal values but rather to his covenantal relationship with God:

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<sup>17</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 507.

“How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9, KJV). Victor Hamilton highlights that Joseph’s reaction “reflects a profound theological conviction that personal sin is ultimately an offense against God Himself.”<sup>18</sup> This awareness suggests that Joseph’s upbringing instilled in him an enduring sense of divine accountability.

Finally, Joseph’s reconciliation with his brothers reveals a mature theological understanding of divine providence. His declaration, “Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good” (Gen 50:20), reflects an advanced comprehension of God’s redemptive purposes through human circumstances. Walter Brueggemann notes, “Joseph articulates one of the most remarkable affirmations of providence in Scripture, interpreting personal suffering as part of God’s larger salvific design.”<sup>19</sup>

Concisely, Joseph’s life illustrates the power of early spiritual mentoring within the family and the sustaining effect of a personal relationship with God. His example demonstrates that spiritually mentored individuals are equipped to remain faithful amid adversity while actively participating in God’s sovereign plan. He became a celebrity in his youth and a shining example of spiritual guidance for young people of all generations.

## **David**

From his early years, his active faith made him a strong young man. First Samuel 17 tells the story of David’s victory over the great Philistine warrior Goliath, demonstrating how much David learned from his parents to believe in God. It is believed that in his formative years, he decided to be in favor of God’s will with

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<sup>18</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 488.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 300.

greater sincerity.<sup>20</sup> His serene confidence in the power of God and his determination to honor God by doing what is right were evident.<sup>21</sup> From his life, we can understand the following: (1) David's sense of destiny is reinforced by his relationship with God. (2) David's relationship with God was open and honest. (3) Everywhere David looked, he perceived God.<sup>22</sup>

David's early life is a powerful example of how strong family mentoring and personal faith can shape a person's character. The courage he displayed against Goliath reflects not only his physical strength but also, more importantly, his deep spiritual trust in God, which was likely nurtured from childhood by his parents. His consistent commitment to God's will, even from a young age, reveals a maturity in faith that many struggle to attain even in adulthood. It is no surprise, then, that Scripture calls him "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22).

### **The Servant Girl of Naaman**

The account of Naaman's servant girl, found in 2 Kings 5:1-14, offers a unique yet profound example of implicit family mentoring in the scripture. This young Israelite girl, taken captive during a Syrian raid, demonstrates remarkable faith, compassion. As she directs her master Naaman, a Syrian military commander, toward the prophet Elisha for healing from leprosy.

Though the text provides little direct information about the girl's family background, her bold testimony suggests a foundation of strong spiritual mentoring

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<sup>20</sup> White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets*, 643.

<sup>21</sup> "I Have Not Proved Them" [1 Sam 17:39], *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 2:538.

<sup>22</sup> Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders*, Jossey-Bass Leadership Network Series 60 (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 30-31.

before her captivity. According to Richard D. Nelson, “the girl’s confident recommendation of Elisha indicates her familiarity with the prophet’s ministry, which would have been fostered through early instruction in the covenantal faith of Israel.”<sup>23</sup> Even as a captive, she exhibits compassion toward her captor, reflecting ethical and theological values likely instilled in her through parental and communal mentoring practices common in ancient Israel (cf. Deut 6:4-9).

The household structure in Israel was not limited to biological family but was often a community of faith, where children were mentored in the knowledge of Yahweh’s power and covenant faithfulness (cf. Exod 12:26-27; Josh 4:6-7). As Bruce Birch notes, “Children in Israelite families were socialized into their faith through daily practices, festivals, and the communal telling of God’s mighty acts.”<sup>24</sup> The servant girl’s knowledge of Elisha and confidence in God’s healing power reveal the effectiveness of such early spiritual formation, even amid personal suffering.

Moreover, scholars such as Walter Brueggemann have argued that her witness serves as a narrative counterpoint to the power structures of the day.<sup>25</sup> As a young, powerless, foreign servant, her voice surprisingly becomes the instrument of divine intervention, suggesting that faithful mentoring prepares even the most marginalized to serve as channels of God’s grace.

While the biblical text offers only a brief mention of Naaman’s servant girl, her actions reflect a deeply rooted spiritual upbringing. The mentoring she received in

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<sup>23</sup> Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1987), 165.

<sup>24</sup> Bruce C. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 55.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Testimony to Otherwise: The Witness of Elijah and Elisha* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001), 85.

her formative years equipped her with resilient faith, compassion for others, and confidence in God's power. Her testimony exemplifies how family and communal mentoring can produce courageous witnesses, even in foreign and hostile environments.

### **Daniel and His Three Companions**

Daniel and his three colleagues, as described in his book, make up the final group of inspirational figures in this section. At the start of the seventy-year captivity, they were taken to Babylon as prisoners together with a huge number of Jews. In the foreign country, these young people were willing to sacrifice all for God's dignity, uphold their ethical standards, and maintain objectivity. They were to fulfill God's plan in the land of their captivity by teaching the nations of the heathen world the advantages of knowing Yahweh. Dan 2:28. Daniel and his companions were to serve as His envoys.<sup>26</sup> Their love for the Lord bears witness to the decisions they made and the risks they were willing to take with their lives. Dan 1:8 tells us that they vowed not to contaminate themselves with the royal meal and drink. The reason behind their belief that the king's food and wine are ritually contaminated is not written in Daniel 1. Maybe it is because they thought that the meal was first offered in a pagan temple to the gods of Babylon.<sup>27</sup> Daniel made the choice to be cast into the lions' den rather than betray the Lord. Daniel 6:16. In addition, his three friends chose to be cast into the flaming furnace rather than break the Decalogue's second commandment. Dan 3:16-18.

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<sup>26</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Story of Prophets and Kings: As Illustrated in the Captivity and Restoration of Israel* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 479.

<sup>27</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 295

Daniel and his companions demonstrate how early spiritual mentoring fosters steadfast faith. Despite exile and cultural pressure, their deep-rooted convictions empowered them to remain loyal to God, becoming bold witnesses of His sovereignty.

### **New Testament View of Spiritual Mentoring in Youth**

The Old Testament era was not the end of young spiritual mentoring. According to the New Testament writings, the early church was concerned about the spiritual growth of young people. Since the doctrines of the Pharisees corrupted the Jewish schools (Matt 23:15), youth were mentored within their families and the church community. Examples will be given in this section to bolster the ongoing necessity to maintain youth in spiritual communion with God and to be initiated into His cause.

#### **Spiritual Mentoring in the Life of John the Baptist**

Though the public ministry of John the Baptist is characterized by prophetic independence and wilderness asceticism, the Gospel of Luke emphasizes that his early formation occurred within a household marked by priestly tradition and spiritual devotion. The mentoring influence of his parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, provided the foundational religious, ethical, and prophetic framework that prepared John for his role as the forerunner of the Messiah.

Zechariah, a priest “of the division of Abijah” (Luke 1:5), and Elizabeth, “a descendant of Aaron,” were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luke 1:6, KJV). Their piety and scriptural literacy would have significantly shaped the environment in which John was raised. As Joel B. Green observes, the infancy narrative in Luke sets up a

theological framework in which John's identity and vocation are embedded within Israel's covenantal history and priestly heritage.<sup>28</sup> Zechariah's prophetic benediction (Luke 1:67-79), spoken at John's birth, not only announces his son's role in salvation history but also demonstrates the family's deep engagement with the prophetic tradition. The passage affirms John's divine calling to "go before the Lord to prepare his ways" (Luke 1:76), echoing Malachi's prophecy (Mal 3:1; 4:5-6) and signaling the intergenerational transmission of religious vision and hope.

Elizabeth's influence, though more implicit, is no less formative. Her spiritual discernment in recognizing Mary's pregnancy as divinely initiated (Luke 1:41-45) reflects a profound sensitivity to the work of the Holy Spirit. According to Raymond E. Brown, Elizabeth serves as a model of prophetic receptivity and maternal dedication. She is parallel to the biblical figures such as Hannah, who consecrated their children for divine service.<sup>29</sup> This maternal role likely nurtured John's own awareness of divine calling and cultivated the humility and conviction that marked his later ministry. While the narrative does not describe Elizabeth's direct mentoring, the theological and emotional environment she embodied would have deeply influenced John's early spiritual development.

Though John ultimately retreats to the wilderness, a symbol of separation from institutional structures and societal corruption, his departure should not be interpreted as a rejection of his familial roots. James D.G. Dunn emphasizes that John's prophetic identity is both a continuation and radicalization of the covenantal ethics instilled in

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<sup>28</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 84-88.

<sup>29</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, updated ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 345-348.

him during childhood.<sup>30</sup> His baptismal ministry, moral exhortations, and eschatological urgency reflect the internalization of priestly and prophetic motifs that were likely nurtured in his home.

In conclusion, family mentoring in the life of John the Baptist was foundational to his prophetic mission. The convergence of priestly tradition, prophetic expectation, and righteous parenting created a spiritual ecosystem that formed John into a liminal figure, deeply rooted in Israel's sacred heritage yet uniquely called to herald its fulfillment. As the Gospels suggest, his family background was not incidental but instrumental in preparing the way for the Lord.

### **Spiritual Mentoring in the Life of Jesus Christ**

The early life of Jesus Christ, as depicted in the canonical Gospels, presents a formative context of family mentoring that significantly shaped his identity, religious consciousness, and socio-ethical orientation. Although the synoptic narratives provide limited explicit detail regarding Jesus' domestic upbringing, key elements suggest a robust culture of intergenerational transmission of values, knowledge, and communal responsibility within his household.

Central to this mentoring dynamic is the role of Joseph and Mary, whose fidelity to Jewish religious customs framed Jesus' early spiritual and moral education. Luke 2:41-52 recounts the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover, underscoring a pattern of religious observance that would have cultivated in Jesus a strong foundation in the Torah and the rhythms of liturgical life.<sup>31</sup> Joseph, identified as a

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<sup>30</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 367-370.

<sup>31</sup> Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 84-88.

*tekton* (Greek: τέκτων), or craftsman (Matt 13:55), likely mentored Jesus in vocational skills, integrating manual labor with cultural piety, an essential part of Jewish pedagogy which did not dichotomize work from worship.<sup>32</sup>

Mary's influence, although more implicit, is equally significant. Her theological and prophetic awareness is evident in Luke 1:46-55, which may suggest the domestic environment in which Jesus was nurtured, contained a rich tapestry of scriptural tradition, resistance to injustice, and hope in divine deliverance.<sup>33</sup> Brown refers to Mary as "the first disciple," emphasizing her modeling of faith, obedience, and reflection that likely influenced Jesus' own moral development.<sup>34</sup> Dunn highlights how such a domestic context embedded in Jewish piety would have shaped Jesus' understanding of righteousness and his eventual radicalization of mercy and justice in his public ministry.<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, the family mentoring of Jesus Christ emerges as a multifaceted framework encompassing religious instruction, vocational training, ethical formation, and communal belonging. Though the biblical texts offer glimpses rather than exhaustive narratives, the cumulative picture affirms that Jesus' early development was deeply rooted in the mentoring practices of a devout Jewish household. Preparing Him for his later public ministry and redefinition of kinship around the Kingdom of God.

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<sup>32</sup> Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1, *Jesus Remembered*, 367-370.

<sup>33</sup> Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 345-348.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 348-349.

<sup>35</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 60-64.

## Spiritual Mentoring in the Life of Timothy

*Family spiritual mentoring.* Family concerns are the primary way that spiritual mentoring for Timothy is demonstrated. Timothy should take into account his family's rich religious heritage, according to Paul's message (2 Tim 1:5). Therefore, he is expected to live a life of nobility as a faithful servant. Two women's names are mentioned in the verse above. Lois, Timothy's grandmother, and Eunice, his mother. The name they have given their son reflects their beliefs about spiritual growth and to whom they trust. Two Greek words, *Timao*, which means "I honor," and *Theos*, which means "God," combine to make the name Timothy. Therefore, Timothy means "one whom God honors" or "one who honors God."<sup>36</sup>

Timothy's mother was Jewish, while his father was Greek. Acts 16:1. He knew the Scriptures since he was little (2 Tim 3:15).<sup>37</sup> He observed sound and reasonable piety in his home life. For him, his mother and grandmother's confidence in the sacred oracles always reinforced the blessing of carrying out God's plan.<sup>38</sup> These two godly women had led Timothy according to the Word of God. He was able to remain untarnished by the negative influences around him due to the spiritual force of the teachings he had learned from them. Thus, to prepare him to carry burdens, God and his home tutors worked together.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Samuel Ngewa, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Africa Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 9.

<sup>37</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 664.

<sup>38</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles: In the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 203.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

In sum, Timothy's strong spiritual foundation rests upon the faithful guidance of his growth of their mother and grandmother. They enabled him to honor God and serve steadfastly. This highlights the powerful role of family in spiritual kids.

*Mentoring by assignments.* Timothy also received excellent mentoring from the apostle Paul. Paul never worked in ministry alone; instead, he would always bring someone along to help them develop into leaders and become everything that God intended them to be (Acts 14:40). In this logic, Timothy has been selected by him to be both his son in faith and companion after observing Timothy's faithfulness, stability, and truthfulness (1 Tim 1:2, Acts 16:3).

In the course of this mentoring exercise, Paul gave Timothy several assignments. As the first Christian leader of the Ephesian church,<sup>40</sup> the first letter was addressed to him. It was intended to be read before the entire assembly of the church. By addressing Timothy as his true son in faith (1 Tim 1:2) he wanted to accomplish two intentions. To encourage Timothy, who was faced with the difficult task of untangling problems within the church, and to let the church know that Timothy came with the authority and approval of Paul. He fathered Timothy by helping him grow in his faith and ministry.<sup>41</sup> In the first letter addressed to him, he was required to live and work in the Ephesus Church (1 Tim 1:3); to awaken the gift of God that he had received by putting on Paul's hand and prophecy (2 Tim 1:6, 4:6); to mentor others (2 Tim 2:2); and to remain firm in his faith so that others would not scorn his youth (2 Tim 4:9).

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<sup>40</sup> Eusebius, *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History*, Complete and Unabridged, updated ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 13.

<sup>41</sup> Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Holman New Testament Commentary 9 (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2005), 144.

To conclude, the spiritual mentoring of Timothy exemplifies the vital role of both family and spiritual leaders in shaping a person's faith and ministry. His early foundation, built by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice instilled in him a deep knowledge of Scripture and a steadfast devotion to God from childhood. This familial mentoring prepared him for further spiritual development under the guidance of the Apostle Paul, who recognized Timothy's potential and entrusted him with significant ministry responsibilities. Together, the nurturing at home and the mentoring in ministry equipped Timothy to serve as a faithful leader, demonstrating how spiritual mentoring can produce enduring fruit for God's work.

### **Ellen G. White on Mentoring Spirituality in Youth**

Ellen G. White is considered by Seventh-day Adventists to be more than just a talented writer. They hold that she was sent by God as a special messenger to bring the scriptures to the attention of the world and assist in getting people ready for the second coming of Christ.<sup>42</sup> In her book, *Education*, she emphasizes the value of mentoring children. She states that the church mission may advance in all of its branches with an army of laborers, such as our young, with the proper training, that could supply.<sup>43</sup>

It is the church's responsibility to mentor young people so they can compassionately play their part. Seventh-day Adventist churches need young talent who are well trained and well organized. The young people's abundant energy will be put to use. The youth will use these energies in a way that harms their spirituality and the spirituality of those they associate with if they are not directed into the proper

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<sup>42</sup> Arthur L. White, *Woman of Vision* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), xv.

<sup>43</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 271.

channels.<sup>44</sup> She continued saying that, still, children and young people have received much too little attention. Due to the older church members' lack of compassion and empathy toward them, the youth have not grown as much in the Christian life as they should have.<sup>45</sup>

Briefly, Ellen G. White's writings emphasize the crucial role of mentoring youth within the family and the church. Therefore, they bear a serious responsibility to nurture, guide, and compassionately invest in their younger members, ensuring they are equipped to serve faithfully and effectively.

### Summary

The concept of spiritual youth mentoring is rooted in the biblical and theological framework of the family, dating back to the earliest scriptural narratives. In the Old Testament, the act of childbearing inherently carried the responsibility of nurturing the spiritual development of children. As seen in Genesis 6, antediluvian families influenced the spiritual identity of the next generation. Deuteronomy 6 further formalizes this responsibility, with Moses emphasizing the critical role of parents in transmitting faith to their children. Throughout the biblical record, figures like David, Joseph, and Daniel illustrate the enduring fruits of effective early spiritual mentorship, while the examples of Eli's sons and Lot's daughters reveal the consequences of weak or failed family mentoring.

The New Testament continues this emphasis, presenting cases such as John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and Timothy, whose spiritual formation was deeply shaped by the intentional guidance of their families and community. These examples highlight

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<sup>44</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2005), 211.

<sup>45</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1990), 182.

the powerful role of intergenerational spiritual mentoring within familial and community contexts.

Ellen G. White's writings reinforce this necessity, advocating for deliberate and collective efforts by both the family and the church to nurture spiritually grounded and mission-focused youth. Her vision underscores that sustained spiritual mentorship is not only essential for individual growth but also critical for advancing the church's mission and ensuring the faithfulness of future generations.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature on “Mentoring Youth for Spirituality.” After closely interpreting the Bible and Ellen White’s teachings on the subject, this chapter analyzes, evaluates, and summarizes the opinions of many authors who have contributed to the topic. To build the chapter, the researcher has chosen writings by authors whose ideas are very helpful in understanding the domain of focus.

#### **Exploring Spirituality, Mentoring, and Youth Themes in Literature**

##### **Spirituality**

Throughout the 20th century, the term “spirituality” became extremely popular in various languages, but its exact definition has not been satisfactorily established.<sup>1</sup> The Latin term “spiritualitas,” which is related to the adjective “spiritualis” (spiritual), is where the word “spirituality” first appeared.<sup>2</sup> These come from the Greek words πνευμα/spirit, and the adjective πνευματικός/of the spirit, about the spirit,<sup>3</sup> which are used in Paul’s New Testament epistolary letters.<sup>4</sup> Spiritualitas originally (dating from

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Leslie Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (1997), s.v. “Spirituality.”

<sup>2</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*, Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion Series (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 268.

<sup>4</sup> Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*, 3.

the 5th century) described the kind of life that spiritual abilities should produce, given to every person who believes in Christ. Subsequently, it came to be associated with a spiritual life, spiritual practices, and an interior religion that was deliberately fostered by devotional activities.<sup>5</sup>

Paul often refers to “flesh” as the opposite of spiritual in his epistolary writings. In the Bible, the word “flesh”, particularly in the New Testament, does not refer to the physical body but rather to the entire human being as a frail, corruptible body. Therefore, the intentional contrast is between two attitudes toward life rather than between body and soul. In 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, for instance, a “spiritual person” was just someone who attempted to live under God’s influence, but a “fleshly” (or worldly) person was mostly focused on prosperity, comfort, and personal fulfillment.<sup>6</sup> Briefly, fleshly lives are antithetical to spiritual ones.

Writers in the extensive analysis of the spiritual subject matter have established two viewpoints. The first is about inner existence, the second discusses the internal and external aspects of life. W.C. Roof asserts that nowadays the term “spiritual” describes an inner existence that is intimately associated with religious traditions.<sup>7</sup> This perspective holds that the inner self of the person seeking spirituality is what matters. Therefore, the validity of the external discipline of life is an issue left unanswered by this perspective.

Ahmet Göçer and Habib Özgün expand the definition of “spiritual,” particularly as it relates to relationships, from the inside out. To them, spirituality is

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<sup>5</sup> Cross and Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. “Spirituality.”

<sup>6</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Wade Clark Roof, “Religion and Spirituality,” in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Michele Dillon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 138.

the capacity to build a meaningful relationship with the divine (God), oneself, and others through faith, hope, and love.<sup>8</sup> They believe that leading a happy and authentic religious life is a prerequisite for being a spiritual subject. This life includes all of the experiences of living in relational harmony with God, your community, and yourself, by and within the precepts of faith, hope, and love.

By contrasting the two perspectives, it is reasonable to acknowledge a weakness in the first viewpoint. The spiritual dimension alone does not directly determine the outcomes of internal transformation. Emphasizing distinct religious traditions influences individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and actions. While genuine spiritual transformation originates internally, it necessitates additional factors beyond mere internal change.

McGrath highlights the significance of the external side of spirituality by stating that faith-based spirituality is composed of three elements. The first thing to mention is concepts, or beliefs, that have a significant impact on the formation of the members' ideal lifestyle. Secondly, there are ethical standards that set limits on action, and lastly, there is a way of living that strikes a balance between beliefs, values, and the real world.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, adopting a spiritual lifestyle is essential for individuals pursuing spiritual growth, as evidenced by the consideration and application of the three core elements.

Despite this, the concept of spirituality presents the challenge of defining pathways leading to spiritual fulfillment. Lebacqz and Driskill formulated a

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<sup>8</sup> Ahmet Göçen and Habib Özğan, "Spirituality and Ethics: A Literature Review," *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* 17 (2018): 58.

<sup>9</sup> McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 4.

provisional set of strategies aimed at fostering and advancing spiritual development.<sup>10</sup> They developed a program for continuous spiritual growth and care. According to their framework, the first stage is “spirit and Spirit.” This stage encourages Christians to pursue spiritual excellence by strengthening their relationship with God. As a result, their spirit aligns with the Spirit of their Master. The second stage involves spiritual discipline. It serves as a tool for spiritual development within defined boundaries. The third concept emphasizes accountability. It calls for ethical conduct following spiritual transformation. Finally, the “grid” reflects the firm belief that everything remains under the Lord’s control. This perspective influences intrapersonal, interpersonal, structural, and environmental aspects of life.

## **Mentoring**

Mentoring is a collaborative learning relationship. It involves two or more individuals who share ownership of the process. Both parties hold responsibility for supporting the mentee. The goal is to help the mentee achieve clear, mutually agreed-upon learning objectives.<sup>11</sup> The idea of mentoring is not new; it has been practiced informally for ages and has contributed to the vitality of organizations.<sup>12</sup> Applying this definition to spiritual mentoring, it may be understood as a structured process whereby the mentor assists the mentee in advancing toward clearly defined spiritual goals. This guidance facilitates the mentee’s growth in spiritual maturity, fostering progress in their personal relationship with the divine.

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<sup>10</sup> Karen Lebacqz and Joseph D. Driskill, *Ethics and Spiritual Care: A Guide for Pastors, Chaplains, and Spiritual Directors* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 33.

<sup>11</sup> Lois J. Zachary, *Creating a Mentoring Culture: The Organization’s Guide* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Facilitating growth in faith through spiritual mentoring requires the fundamental competencies necessary to engage effectively in a one-on-one relational context.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that many formative activities are embedded within the mentoring process. These may include coaching, teaching, caring, counseling, and providing spiritual guidance.

Like all living organisms, mentees are constantly in the process of becoming. This movement is sustained by ongoing, progressive improvement.<sup>14</sup> Specifically speaking, spiritual mentoring is a purposeful, dynamic partnership based on trust wherein an individual helps another to maximize God's grace in their life and ministry.<sup>15</sup>

Within this dynamic, the mentor serves as a facilitator of spiritual discernment, encouraging the mentee to recognize and respond to God's activity in his life. Through intentional dialogue, reflection, and prayer, spiritual mentoring fosters personal transformation, guiding the mentee toward greater spiritual maturity and vocational clarity.

## **Youth**

Over time, the vocabulary used to describe youth has evolved. The definition of youth in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is simple. It is the time between childhood and adulthood.<sup>16</sup> According to Brown, Larson, and Saraswathi, the majority of today's globalized society views the social category of youth (adolescents and young adults)

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<sup>13</sup> Tony Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth: Sharing the Journey of Faith* (Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008), 14.

<sup>14</sup> Zachary, *Creating a Mentoring Culture*, 54.

<sup>15</sup> Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2000), s.v. "Youth."

as a transitional period, a stage in the human life cycle. It is a quasi-liminal state in which people expect to grow up and become adults. Because of this, young individuals between the ages of 13 and 30 perceive the world in a different way than do persons who are older or younger. This is true in most parts of the world, including most global societies.<sup>17</sup>

In general, a person grows as he goes through childhood, early and late adolescence, and young adulthood. At this point, Randy D. Reese and Robert Loane, in their book, *Deep Mentoring: Guiding Others on Their Leadership Journey*,<sup>18</sup> said that our default settings or coping mechanisms are ingrained in us. A multitude of circumstances molds our personalities for the path ahead. A person's family of origin, other social factors, and the historical setting of their life shape identity formation. Along with potential clues about one's fate, the early development of essential abilities may also be forestalled. The backdrop of this maturing process is always God's sovereign sculpting. These were extremely hard years for some, so for them, it will always be a tough presence to discover and trust. While others reflect on the past, it serves as a reminder of God's character, affirmation of their identity, and their calling. A more in-depth spiritual mentoring relationship is both feasible and beneficial during these formative years.

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<sup>17</sup> Paul L. Gareau, Spencer Culham Bullivant, and Peter Beyer, eds., "Introduction: Youth, Religion and Identity in a Globalizing Context: Canadian, Australian, American, and German Case Studies" in *Youth, Religion, and Identity in a Globalizing Context: International Perspectives*, Youth in a Globalizing World 8 (Boston, MA: Brill, 2019), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Randy D. Reese and Robert Loane, *Deep Mentoring: Guiding Others on Their Leadership Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 76.

## **Relationships between Spirituality, Religion, and Ethics**

The relationship between spirituality, religion, and ethics is both complex and interdependent. Spirituality refers to an individual's personal experience with the sacred or transcendent.<sup>19</sup> It often emphasizes personal meaning, inner transformation, and a sense of divine connection.<sup>20</sup> Religion, in contrast, is typically institutional. It provides doctrines, rituals, and communal structures that guide belief and practice.<sup>21</sup>

Ethics emerges as a natural extension of both spirituality and religion. It involves the application of moral principles to human behavior.<sup>22</sup> Spirituality shapes ethics by cultivating virtues such as compassion, humility, and integrity.<sup>23</sup> Religion reinforces ethical behavior by establishing communal norms and moral expectations.<sup>24</sup> As Volf states, "Religious traditions provide the narratives and practices that sustain ethical life."<sup>25</sup>

In Christian contexts, spirituality and ethics are inseparable. The imitation of Christ serves as both a spiritual ideal and an ethical imperative.<sup>26</sup> For example, in the

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<sup>19</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, *Spirituality in the New Millennium* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003), 15.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper, 1957), 42.

<sup>22</sup> James F. Keenan, *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 5.

<sup>23</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 23.

<sup>24</sup> John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 12.

<sup>25</sup> Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011), 35.

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 98.

Sermon on the Mount, Jesus integrates spiritual devotion with ethical conduct (Matt 5-7).<sup>27</sup> This integration reflects a holistic understanding of discipleship, where internal transformation results in outward moral behavior.

From a Seventh-day Adventist perspective, this relationship is particularly significant. Spirituality involves an ongoing relationship with Christ (John 15:4-5; Gal 2:20), while religion provides the theological framework rooted in scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17; Isa 8:20). Ethics manifests in obedience to God's law, reflecting both love for God and neighbor (Matt 22:37-40; Eccl 12:13; John 14:15; Rom 13:8-10). In this view, obedience is not legalism but a response of love, empowered by grace and guided by divine revelation.<sup>28</sup> Thus, spirituality, religion, and ethics function together to shape the believer's character and conduct in preparation for the second coming of Christ.<sup>29</sup>

This integrated relationship further underscores the transformative role of spiritual mentoring within the Christian tradition. Spiritual mentoring functions as a mediating practice, facilitating the development of personal spirituality while grounding the individual within the theological and ethical boundaries of the faith community. Through intentional guidance, the mentor helps the mentee internalize religious teachings, fostering both spiritual growth and ethical accountability. In this sense, spiritual mentoring is not merely instructional but formational, aiming at holistic character development.

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<sup>27</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 195.

<sup>28</sup> Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 59.

<sup>29</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1892), 57

## **Challenges to Youth Participation in African Church Life**

As the demographic majority in many African congregations,<sup>30</sup> the active participation of youth is crucial to the long-term sustainability and vitality of religious institutions across the continent. Despite their numerical significance, young people often encounter a range of sociocultural, theological, and institutional obstacles that limit their meaningful involvement in church life. These barriers include generational hierarchies, rigid ecclesiastical structures, doctrinal conservatism, and limited opportunities for leadership and decision-making. This section undertakes a critical review of relevant literature to explore the factors that marginalize youth within ecclesial spaces.

### **Generational Disconnect and Leadership Structures**

One of the primary challenges facing youth participation in African churches is the generational disconnect between church leadership and the youth. Older clergy and elders who maintain rigid hierarchical structures that limit the inclusion of younger voices govern most African churches. Studies have shown that young people often feel alienated from decision-making processes and perceive the church as resistant to change.<sup>31</sup> As Mbiti notes, African Christianity frequently inherits patriarchal and gerontocratic models from both traditional African culture and colonial mission structures, which discourage innovation and youth-led initiatives.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, sustainable ministry in Africa must move beyond tokenism and actively

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<sup>30</sup> Robert J. Priest and Kirimi Barine, *African Christian Youth: Contextualized Ministry* (Nairobi, Kenya: Hippo Books, 2015), 22.

<sup>31</sup> Ezra Chitando, *Youth and Religion in Africa* (London: Routledge, 2012), 45.

<sup>32</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi, Kenya: Heinemann, 1990), 175.

invest in structures that empower youth as partners in both vision-setting and ministry execution.

### **Theological Exclusion and Doctrinal Rigidity**

Theological teachings in many African churches can also contribute to youth disengagement. The application of conservative doctrines often results in rigid moral expectations that fail to engage the lived realities of young people.<sup>33</sup> In some cases, church teachings focus heavily on obedience and tradition, offering little room for critical questioning or contextual interpretation. This can result in a form of spiritual disenfranchisement among youth who seek a more experiential and dialogical faith expression.<sup>34</sup> As a result, many youth feel spiritually silenced rather than nurtured, prompting them to either withdraw from church life or seek alternative spiritual communities that affirm inquiry, authenticity, and relevance.

### **Socioeconomic Barriers and Educational Disparities**

The socioeconomic context of many African countries also plays a significant role in limiting youth participation. High levels of unemployment and limited access to education reduce the capacity of young people to engage in voluntary church work.<sup>35</sup> In urban settings, the pressures of economic survival often lead youth to

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<sup>33</sup>Steve de Gruchy, "Theological Education and Youth Ministry in Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 129 (2008): 37-48.

<sup>34</sup>Tinyiko Maluleke, "African Christianity as an African Religion," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 5, no. 1 (2002): 6-10.

<sup>35</sup> African Development Bank, *African Economic Outlook 2023: Mobilizing Private Sector Financing for Climate and Green Growth* (Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire: AfDB, 2023), 62-65.

prioritize work over church attendance. In rural areas, limited mobility and infrastructural challenges exacerbate the sense of exclusion.<sup>36</sup>

Churches may unintentionally reinforce these barriers by prioritizing contributions (financial or time-based) that youth cannot consistently provide. This often leads to the perception that they are less committed or less spiritual, reinforcing negative stereotypes and deepening their marginalization within faith communities.

### **Cultural Perceptions of Youth**

Traditional African societies often view youth as “not yet fully adult,” which carries over into church life and policies.<sup>37</sup> This cultural perception delays youth involvement in leadership and decision-making, despite their numerical dominance in many congregations. Akombo argues that this marginalization is both systemic and symbolic: youth are visible in numbers but invisible in influence.<sup>38</sup>

In many African churches, the roles assigned to youth are often limited to entertainment, such as singing or performing at events, and logistical support like ushering or sound system operations. While these functions are valuable, they frequently do not involve youth in meaningful theological reflection or strategic decision-making. This form of tokenism, where young people are present but not truly empowered, can lead to feelings of marginalization and underappreciating. Over time, such superficial inclusion fosters disillusionment and weakens the commitment of

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<sup>36</sup> Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 151-153.

<sup>37</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Publishing, 2003), 110.

<sup>38</sup> Christopher Akombo, “Youth Marginalization in the African Church: A Kenyan Case Study,” *Africa Theological Journal* 39, no. 2 (2011): 85-90.

youth to long-term church engagement, as they begin to perceive their contributions as undervalued.

### **Lack of Contextualized Ministry Models**

Lastly, the failure to contextualize ministry models for youth engagement remains a critical issue. Many churches continue to employ imported Western or outdated ministry frameworks that do not resonate with the African youth experience.<sup>39</sup> Ministries often lack creativity, technological relevance, or avenues for authentic expression. This disconnect discourages sustained involvement, especially among urban and digitally connected youth who seek relevance, inclusion, and purpose in their spiritual journey.<sup>40</sup>

When ministry approaches are perceived as foreign, outdated, or irrelevant to the lived experiences of African youth, especially those in urban and digitally connected settings, young people are less likely to feel motivated or inspired to remain involved. This lack of resonance can foster feelings of alienation and spiritual disengagement. Prompting youth to seek alternative spaces where their cultural realities, technological fluency, and desire for authentic expression are better acknowledged and embraced. Consequently, the church risks losing its influence over a vital demographic, undermining its mission and long-term sustainability.

In conclusion, youth participation in the African church is impeded by a complex interplay of structural, theological, cultural, and socioeconomic challenges. Overcoming these barriers demands an intentional reimagining of church structures, theological engagement, and ministry practices. To cultivate genuine inclusion,

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<sup>39</sup> Priest and Kirimie, *African Christian Youth*, 22.

<sup>40</sup> Afe Adogame, "Engaging the Digital: African Youth and New Christianities," *Studies in World Christianity* 16, no. 2 (2010): 189-202.

churches must transcend tokenistic involvement. They have to create meaningful spaces where young people are empowered as active partners and co-creators in shaping the life and mission of the church.

### **Involving Youth in Their Spiritual Mentoring Process**

Since youth make up a large majority of the church's membership, they must be active in all aspects of it. Driskell argues that young people should be regarded as legitimate participants in the development process, just like other groups in the community.<sup>41</sup> As such, an endeavor ought to be undertaken to cultivate, instruct, and prepare them for their means of existence, redemption in God, and service to God and humankind.

Father Matthew Attia of Saint George (Coptic Orthodox) claims that the key component of the church-youth relationship is involvement and participation in the church.<sup>42</sup> He kept stating that by actively participating in parish life, young people could be encouraged to grow into responsible members of the church. When given the chance to contribute, the young people feel that they are genuine members of the church community rather than just guests at events like camps, trips, and liturgies.

Yes, it is capital that every attempt should make use of the diverse abilities and skills that each young person possesses. This will be done for the benefit of their spiritual guidance and the assistance of church missions. To let young people become inactive in the church is to lose them and hinder the growth of the church across all of

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<sup>41</sup> David Driskell, *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth: A Manual for Participation* (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2002), 22.

<sup>42</sup> Saint George Coptic Orthodox Church, "Relationship between Youth and the Church," accessed January 28, 2018, <https://saintgeorgechurch.org.au/article/relationship-between-youth-and-the-church/>.

its branches. However, involving youth as co-creators in their spiritual journey strengthens the church's vitality and prepares future leaders.<sup>43</sup>

### **The Cognitive Development of a Child**

Cognitive development refers to the growth of a child's ability to think, reason, and understand. It encompasses perception, memory, problem-solving, and decision-making abilities. Jean Piaget's theory remains foundational in understanding this process. He proposed that children progress through four distinct stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational.<sup>44</sup> Each stage reflects qualitative changes in how children perceive and interact with the world.

During the sensorimotor stage (birth to two years), infants learn through sensory experiences and motor activities. They develop object permanence, recognizing that objects continue to exist even when out of sight.<sup>45</sup> In the preoperational stage (ages two to seven), symbolic thinking emerges. Children begin using language and engage in pretend play, but their thinking remains egocentric.<sup>46</sup> The concrete operational stage (age seven to eleven) brings logical reasoning about concrete events. Children understand concepts such as conservation, classification, and seriation.<sup>47</sup> The final stage, formal operational (age twelve and beyond),

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<sup>43</sup> Priest and Kirimie, *African Christian Youth*, 40.

<sup>44</sup> Jean Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952), 18

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>46</sup> Jean Piaget, *The Language and Thought of the Child* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1926), 15.

<sup>47</sup> Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 101

introduces abstract and hypothetical thinking. Adolescents can reason systematically and consider multiple perspectives.<sup>48</sup>

Lev Vygotsky expanded upon Piaget's work by emphasizing the role of social interaction in cognitive development.<sup>49</sup> His concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) illustrates that learning occurs best when children engage in tasks slightly beyond their current abilities with guidance from more knowledgeable individuals.<sup>50</sup> Scaffolding, where adults or peers provide temporary support, enables children to master complex skills.<sup>51</sup>

Contemporary research highlights the integration of biological, social, and cultural factors in cognitive development.<sup>52</sup> Neurodevelopmental studies confirm that brain maturation, particularly in the prefrontal cortex, correlates with improvements in executive functions such as planning, impulse control, and working memory.<sup>53</sup> These cognitive advances are crucial for academic success, moral reasoning, and social competence.

Effective educational practices recognize these developmental principles. Instruction tailored to a child's cognitive stage enhances learning outcomes.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child*, 118.

<sup>49</sup> Lev Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 86.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>51</sup> Barbara Rogoff, *Apprenticeship in Thinking: Cognitive Development in Social Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 141

<sup>52</sup> Robert Siegler et al., *How Children Develop* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2014), 21.

<sup>53</sup> Adele Diamond, "Executive Functions," *Annual Review of Psychology* 64 (2013): 135-168.

<sup>54</sup> David Elkind, *The Power of Play: Learning What Comes Naturally* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2007), 56.

Educators, mentors, and caregivers play a vital role by providing enriched environments that stimulate intellectual growth while offering appropriate challenges.

In light of the stages of cognitive development, spiritual mentoring plays a vital role in nurturing a child's holistic growth. As children's cognitive capacities evolve, so too does their ability to engage meaningfully with spiritual concepts, moral reasoning, and personal faith. Spiritual mentors, whether parents, teachers, or church leaders, serve as guides who scaffold a child's understanding of divine truths, adapting instruction to the child's developmental stage.<sup>55</sup> Through relational engagement, mentors provide both cognitive and spiritual challenges within the child's zone of proximal development, facilitating deeper comprehension of Scripture, moral principles, and personal faith commitment.<sup>56</sup> This intentional guidance not only supports cognitive maturity but also fosters a resilient spiritual identity, preparing children to navigate complex ethical decisions with a Christ-centered worldview.

As Seventh-day Adventist educators emphasize, true education integrates spiritual formation with intellectual growth, ensuring that children are “thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts.”<sup>57</sup> In this synthesis, spiritual mentoring becomes a transformative process, shaping both the mind and the soul in alignment with God's redemptive purposes.

### **Integrating Cognitive Development in Youth Spiritual Mentoring in the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

The establishment of an effective youth ministry within the Seventh-day Adventist Church reflects an intentional commitment to mentoring young people in

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<sup>55</sup> Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*, 86.

<sup>56</sup> Rogoff, *Apprenticeship in Thinking*, 141.

<sup>57</sup> White, *Education*, 17.

both spirituality and active participation in the church. The activity of youth ministry, conducted for, with, and by young people, is not merely organizational; it is fundamentally developmental. Youth ministry operates at all levels of the SDA Church. It starts from the local church and reaches the General Conference. The system matches both cognitive and spiritual development stages. It ensures mentoring is age-appropriate. This approach supports the holistic growth of young people.<sup>58</sup>

Central to this mentoring approach are the four primary goals of SDA youth ministry.<sup>59</sup> (1) Giving young people a solid biblical basis that will help them form a lasting relationship and devotion to Christ and his church. (2) To guide young people in discovering and cultivating their spiritual gifts and abilities, as well as their understanding of their unique worth in Christ. (3) Give young people the tools they need to serve others in God's church and the community. Moreover, (4) to ensure that young people are included in all facets of church life and leadership so they can fully engage in the church's purpose.

The Working Policy of the General Conference affirms that the church, school, and home must collaborate to provide comprehensive support for youth spiritual formation.<sup>60</sup> The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* further emphasizes the necessity of involving youth in meaningful leadership roles that match their developmental readiness.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (2016), 102-105.

<sup>59</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2012), 351.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>61</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (2016), 102-105.

The SDA Church has thoughtfully organized its youth mentoring programs according to developmental stages. The Adventurer Club (ages 6-9) cater to children at early stages of cognitive development, emphasizing concrete experiences of faith through stories, songs, and simple service projects. Pathfinder Club (ages 10-15) provide more complex lessons, fostering critical thinking and ethical reflection while engaging in community service and leadership development. Ambassador Club (ages 16-21) and Adventist Youth Society (ages 22-30) challenge senior youth and young adults with more abstract theological reflection, leadership responsibilities, and advanced ministry opportunities, aligning with their advanced cognitive capabilities.<sup>62</sup>

By integrating principles of cognitive development into its youth spiritual mentoring framework, the SDA Church respects the natural psychological growth of its young members. This integration ensures that spiritual formation is both developmentally appropriate and enduring. As a result, spiritual mentoring becomes a transformative process that shapes mature disciples. These individuals are prepared to serve both the church and society while remaining deeply grounded in their Adventist identity and mission.

### **Summary**

This literature review examines how spirituality, mentoring, and cognitive development work together to influence youth involvement in the church. Divided into six key sections, it explores both the theoretical foundations and real-life challenges of youth spiritual mentoring.

Spirituality is presented as a broad and layered concept that goes beyond religious rituals, serving as a personal guide to meaning, purpose, and ethical living.

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<sup>62</sup> Siegler et al., *How Children Develop*, 21.

Mentoring is described as a key relationship-based process that helps youth grow spiritually and personally, especially in religious settings where young people are exploring their identities.

The review also examines how spirituality, religion, and ethics are closely linked. It stresses that while spirituality often supports religious beliefs, it can also guide moral behavior on its own. Therefore, the church must ensure that its teachings are reflected in everyday ethical actions.

However, many African churches face serious barriers to youth involvement. These include rigid leadership structures, a lack of youth voices in decision-making and poor communication between generations. As a result, many young people feel disconnected from church life and lose interest in long-term spiritual engagement.

To address this, the literature promotes youth-centered mentoring models that involve young people in shaping their own faith journey. These models encourage open dialogue between generations and adapt to the changing needs of youth.

Additionally, the review draws on developmental psychology to emphasize the importance of age-appropriate spiritual mentoring. It argues that effective guidance must consider how young people think and understand complex ideas like faith and morality at different stages of growth.

In conclusion, the review calls for a well-rounded approach to youth mentoring in the church. One that is spiritually deep, ethically grounded, developmentally suitable, and inclusive of youth voices. This integrated model is key to helping youth thrive in their faith and remain actively engaged in church life.

## CHAPTER 4

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

This chapter provides an overview of the local context in which the study was conducted. It begins with a general description of the Republic of Rwanda, highlighting its geography, economy, population dynamics, and religious landscape. Particular attention is given to the historical development of Christianity in Rwanda, especially the emergence and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The discussion then narrows to the specific context of the Kigombe SDA Church in Musanze. The chapter outlines the church's history, demographic composition, and current challenges, with a focus on youth involvement in spiritual activities. Drawing on survey data and interviews, it identifies key barriers hindering active youth participation and engagement. This background establishes the foundation for the intervention program presented in the following chapter.

#### **Description of the Republic of Rwanda**

Rwanda is located in Central Africa, more precisely in the East-Central region. The nation was first colonized by the Germans. Control later shifted to Belgium, under whose administration Rwanda remained until 1962, when it attained full independence. The 1994 genocide against the Tutsis claimed above one million lives. At that time, life was erratic and Rwanda's image was damaged. Due to the high death toll from this genocide, the church was affected. Positively, Rwanda has made remarkable progress since the 1994 Genocide against Tutsis. The country has advanced in various sectors such as tourism, agriculture, education, and health. This

progress can be attributed to the nation's political stability. The church has also changed during this national revolution. In this section, we will provide a brief overview of Rwanda's geography, economy, population, and religious aspects

### **Geographical Situation**

Rwanda is a small country covering an area of 26,338 square kilometers, bordered by Tanzania to the east, Uganda to the north, Burundi to the south, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west. Most of Rwanda's terrain is composed of hills and mountains, which has earned it the nickname "the land of a thousand hills." The highest peak in Rwanda is Karisimbi, which stands at a height of approximately 15,000 feet and is located in the Virunga Mountains northwest of the country. Small areas of rainforest cover Rwanda's western and northeastern boundaries, while the eastern region is characterized by tropical savannah. Kivu Lake, which shares a border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is the largest in Rwanda, covering an area of 1,390 square kilometers.

### **Economic Situation**

In the years following the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsis, Rwanda's economy has experienced significant growth. The International Monetary Fund reports that it has one of the highest growth rates in the world, with an average annual growth rate of 8% between 2004 and 2014.<sup>1</sup> The economy is predominantly agricultural, with the vast majority of the population engaged in subsistence farming.

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<sup>1</sup> Wadzanai Mhute, "Rising from the Ashes: Twenty Years after Genocide, Rwanda Makes Huge Development Strides," posted March 24, 2014, accessed 13 June 2024, <https://africarenewal.un.org/en/magazine/rising-ashes>.

Coffee, tea, and some minerals are for export, while cereals, vegetables, rice, cassava, sweet and Irish potatoes, and beans are grown as food crops <sup>2</sup>

According to the Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census conducted in 2022, around 2.3 million households in Rwanda, which account for 69% of all households, are involved in agricultural activities.<sup>3</sup> Out of these, approximately 2.1 million families, or 63%, are engaged in farming. The primary crops cultivated in Rwanda are beans, which are farmed by 80% of households, followed by maize (56%), cassava (49%), sweet potatoes (44%), and bananas (24%). Most households grow at least one type of fruit, and about 1.7 million or 50% of households own at least one livestock. In Rwanda, the primary animals kept by homes are cows (which account for 28% of all households), followed by goats (19%), pigs (15%), chickens (12%), and rabbits (6%).<sup>4</sup>

In addition, we must not overlook stating one of the main drivers of Rwanda's economy, which is the tourism sector. In Rwanda, the mountain gorilla is one of the main attractions for upscale travelers.<sup>5</sup> The Rwanda Development Board reported that the country received a total of 1,105,460 foreign visitors in 2022. Of these visitors, nearly 60% hailed from various African nations, indicating a growing interest in the country as a travel destination. The tourism industry received a major boost from Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events, which contributed significantly to the overall tourism income. Tourism income saw a significant increase from US\$164

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<sup>2</sup> Mhute, "Rising from the Ashes."

<sup>3</sup> National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, *Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey, 2014-2015* (Kigali, Rwanda: National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, March 2016), 129.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>5</sup> Rwanda Development Board, *2022 Annual Report* (Kigali, Rwanda: Rwanda Development Board, 2023), 43.

million in 2021 to US\$445 million in 2022, marking a growth of 171.3%. This rise indicates an astounding recovery of 89.3% from the pre-pandemic period (COVID-19).<sup>6</sup>

### **Country Population**

In Africa, Rwanda has one of the highest population densities. Although urbanization has been increasing gradually, the majority of the population still lives in rural areas.<sup>7</sup> According to the analysis of the 2022 General Population Census, Rwanda's population as of August 2022 was 13,246,394, with a population density of 503 people per square kilometer. The average growth rate between 2012 and 2022 was 2.3%. Almost all of the population (99%) are Rwandans, while foreigners account for 0.9% of the population, which is approximately 117 thousand people. The study also found that life expectancy has been improving, with 51.2 years in 2002, 64.5 years in 2012, and 69.6 years in 2022. Of the total population, 51.5% are females (6,817,068) and 48.5% are males (6,429,326). The urban-rural demographic ratio shows that there are roughly three urban residents (27.9%) for every seven rural people (72.1%) in Rwanda. Data show that access to electricity by households is significantly higher in urban areas (84.6%) than in rural areas (51.3%).<sup>8</sup>

Rwanda's population is relatively youthful, with 5.9 million (45%) of its 13.24 million residents being under 17 years old. 2.949 million male children compared to

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<sup>6</sup> Rwanda Development Board, *2022 Annual Report*, 43.

<sup>7</sup> National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, *Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey, 2014-2015*, xviii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.

2.946 million female children is a minor difference.<sup>9</sup> This has an impact on church planning as long as a large portion of its membership is made up of young men.

## **Religion**

In Rwanda, almost everyone has a religious affiliation except for 3% of the population.<sup>10</sup> In line with the 2022 results of Rwanda's National Institute of Statistics, Christianity is the predominant religion in Rwanda, with 92% of the population practicing it. Of those who practice Christianity, 40% identify as Catholic, followed by ADEPR (21%), Protestants (15%), and Seventh-day Adventist church (12%). Muslims make up about 2% of the population, while less than 1% of people practice traditional religions.

Table 2 presents the resident population of Rwanda by religious affiliation and place of residence based on data from the Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census (2022) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR).

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<sup>9</sup> National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, *Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey, 2014-2015*, 52.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

*Table 2. Resident Population by Religious Affiliation and Residence*

Religious affiliation	Count			Percentage		
	Rwanda	Urban	Rural	Rwanda	Urban	Rural
Total	13,246,394	3,701,245	9,545,149	100	27.9	72.1
Catholic	5,286,003	1,311,625	3,974,378	39.9	9.9	30.0
ADEPR	2,820,813	904,788	1,916,025	21.3	6.8	14.5
Protestant	1,928,741	379,825	1,548,916	14.6	2.9	11.7
Adventist	1,612,482	449,808	1,162,674	12.2	3.4	8.8
Other Christians	553,174	239,900	313,274	4.2	1.8	2.4
Muslim	265,317	164,304	101,013	2.0	1.2	0.8
Jehovah witness	93,131	36,554	56,577	0.7	0.3	0.4
Traditional/ Animist	2,112	878	1,234	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other religion	264,319	102,245	162,074	2.0	0.8	1.2
No Religion	402,517	104,832	297,685	3.0	0.8	2.2
Not stated/Don't know	17,785	6,486	11,299	0.1	0.0	0.1

Source: Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census, 2022 (NISR)

### **Genesis of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda**

The Seventh-day Adventist Mission in Rwanda was established under challenging circumstances after the First World War. <sup>11</sup>The first pioneer who was considered the SDA Church missionary in Rwanda was D. Elie Delhove, a Belgian Adventist soldier. He was born on June 9, 1882, in a humble Protestant peasant family in the Wallonia region. Delhove became familiar with the Adventist message when a Canadian relative brought him a box of Adventist-printed evangelical literature. Although he studied them, he didn't become aware of the SDA Church until much

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<sup>11</sup> Jérôme Birikunzira Ngabo, *Implantation and Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda: 1919-2000* (Saarbrücken, Dutschland: Gardners Books, 2010), 68

later, when Swiss preacher Joseph Curdy visited Liege in an evangelistic campaign. In 1906, he chose to get baptized in the SDA.<sup>12</sup>

He traveled to England to attend Stanborough College to learn English in preparation for missionary work. He believed that his nursing skills would help him care for Africans better. When ready, he prayed to God for a place in Africa and applied for it. In 1913, he left for Europe but was soon compelled by his nation to serve in the military and return home as a soldier. Instead of going back to his own country, he asked to serve in Africa, where he spent four years working as an English army spy. During his military duty in Rwanda, he realized it would make a good missionary territory. In 1918, he visited his family after a gap of four years. During the visit, he met Henri Monnier, a young Swiss man married to an English woman, who was interested in missionary work. He convinced them to join him as missionaries in Africa. In March 1919, two families left England and arrived at the Congo River estuary after a five-month journey. From there, they traveled by various means, including vehicle, riverboat, train, and on foot, across the vast Congo. Finally, on August 4, 1919, they arrived at Kibuye in Rwanda, which is located on the eastern shore of Lake Kivu. The message of the Seventh-day Adventist has been spreading ever since.<sup>13</sup>

### **Background of the Kigombe Seventh-day Adventist Church**

The Kigombe SDA Church is located in the city of Musanze, which is in the Northern Province of Rwanda. The settlement is located at the base of the country's

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<sup>12</sup> Ngabo, *Implantation and Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda*, 69.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-75.

highest volcano, the Karisimbi, which peaks at 4,519 meters above sea level.<sup>14</sup> The area surrounding the city is mountainous, and it experiences rainfall throughout the year, with a brief dry season lasting from June to August. Due to the heavy rainfall, the foliage remains green all year long, which gives the city a beautiful appearance. Additionally, the presence of mountain gorillas, a rare species, attracts a significant number of tourists to the region, making it an important wildlife destination.

The city is home to many businesses that provide a significant source of income, with farming being a major contributor. There are numerous academic institutions and schools providing education at all levels, as well as markets, hotels, and various retail and wholesale stores. Moreover, the city hosts national and international financial institutions, referral hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, and judicial chambers. It's easy to see how the city is bustling every day with all the events and institutions. This makes it difficult for parents and church officials to find quiet time to tend to the needs of the kids, both at home and at the church.

The Kigombe Church was established in this area back in 1994. One of the founders, Elder Nyakana Rwarinda Eneas, stated that the majority of them were from the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly known as Zaire. As the city grew, the number of people observing the sabbath increased dramatically from its initial small number. At present, there are 1822 registered believers, with two-thirds of them being young people. The actual attendance is less than 670 because some people relocated without following the transfer procedure. The researcher aims to evaluate the current state of mentoring for a large young population seeking spiritual guidance and suggest ways to improve the process.

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<sup>14</sup> WorldData.info, "Rwanda," last modified February 2024, accessed 12 June 2024, <https://www.worlddata.info/africa/rwanda/index.php>.

### **Pre-Program Survey and Interview**

Before the development of the program aimed at addressing the mentorship of youth in spirituality within the Kigombe SDA Church, a meeting was held with the congregation to raise awareness about the initiative. Thereafter, Interviews were conducted from September 02<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024. It permitted the assessment of youth spirituality in the church and the challenges surrounding low youth involvement and participation in church activities. The interview protocol was utilized to guide interviewees in gathering essential data. From the Kigombe SDA Church, especially in the Adventist youth ministry department (2016-2024), the figures below indicate the spiritual trend that shows only a few young people are involved in church activities.

Table 3 and Figure 2 present the trends in youth spiritual engagement at Kigombe SDA Church from 2016 to 2024, as reported by the Adventist Youth Ministry (AYM) Department. These trends provide valuable insights into the changing patterns of youth involvement and serve as a basis for understanding the factors influencing spiritual engagement within the church community.

*Table 3. Trends in Youth Spiritual Engagement Across Various Religious Activities from 2016 to 2024*

Indicators	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Attendance in SS groups	71%	68%	73%	60%	47%	30%	60%	55%	54%
Mid-week prayer meeting	20%	20%	18%	5%	7%	9%	10%	9%	7%
Tithe giving	28%	25%	23,5%	23%	4%	5%	29%	16%	12%
Harvest ingathering	9,5%	8%	4%	2%	0,01%	1%	3%	2,8%	2,1%
Youth week of prayer	45%	44%	39%	38%	19%	20%	24%	20%	19%
Community services	16%	13%	10%	6%	18%	14%	8%	7,3%	6,5%
Camping attendance	25%	20%	20,5%	18%	0	0	15%	9%	9%
Organized international youth celebration days	60%	52%	52%	43%	0	0	35%	29%	25%
Gospel music concert attendance	55%	60%	60%	68%	0	0	70%	87%	90%
Distribution of Discovery lessons/Genzura	25%	21%	12%	6%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Daily Bible reading	21%	18%	15%	15%	12	10	8%	3%	3%

Source: Kigombe SDA Church, *AYM Departmental report (2026-2024)*

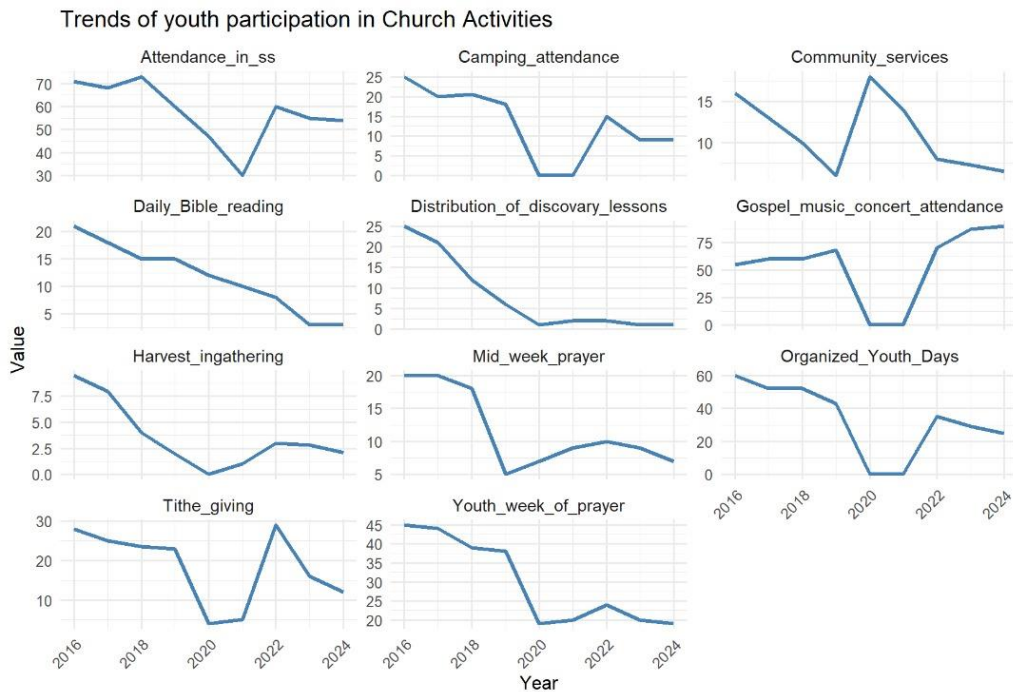


Figure 2. Trends of Youth Participation in Various Church Activities (2016-2024)

These findings point to a downward trend in youth spirituality. Except for attending music performances, the indicators show a falling sequence. The years 2020 and 2021 exhibit particularly notable deviations, with certain variables registering values of zero. These anomalies are attributable to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of associated public health measures, which significantly suppressed activity levels reflected in the data. The analysis of the figures about different variables highlights a significant concern regarding the mentorship of youth in spirituality. If left unaddressed, this issue poses potential challenges to the growth and sustainability of the church community. The leaders of Kigombe Church must be encouraged to seek a sustainable solution to this challenge. They must foster a vibrant environment where youth can fully engage in church spiritual-related activities and contribute to its development. Although the youth constitute a significant portion of the congregation, their participation in church programs is lacking. There are significant indications that the Kigombe SDA Church

is not fully engaging its youth, which may negatively impact their spiritual development and the overall health of the church. According to 2024 church records, the total active membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kigombe stands at six hundred and seventy (670). Of these, individuals between 4 and 30 years make four hundred and thirty-three (433), representing 64.6% of the total membership. Although some young people are occasionally allowed to participate in church programs and activities, their overall involvement remains minimal.

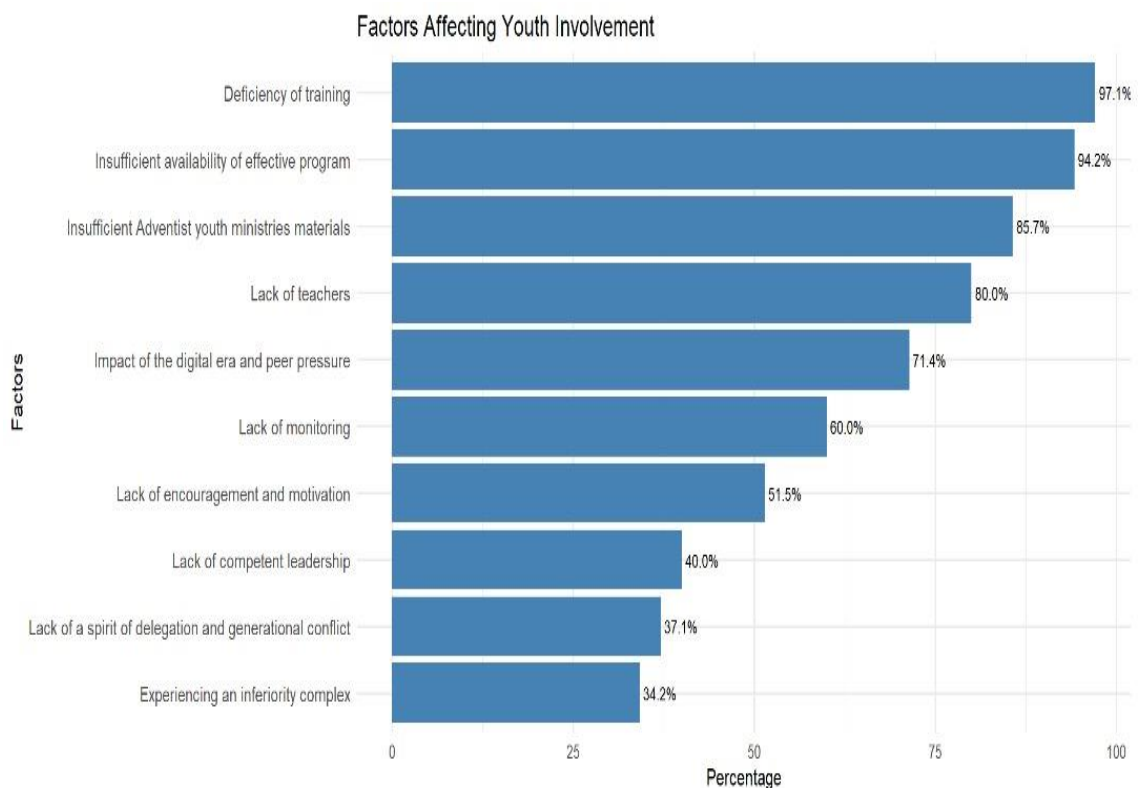
### **Factors Hindering the Youth's Spiritual Involvement in the Kigombe Seventh-day Adventist Church**

The limited participation and engagement of youth in the church can be attributed to many factors, as revealed through the interviews conducted. A closer examination revealed that many young individuals and the leadership genuinely desire youth to participate in the church's spiritual programs. Yet, they are not actively doing so. Most interviewed youth participants expressed concern about this issue and were interested in identifying solutions.

Table 4 and Figure 3 present the factors affecting youth involvement in the Kigombe SDA Church as identified through interviews with youth members and church leaders. The data reveal a range of challenges that hinder active participation of young people at The Kigombe SDA Church. Collectively, these findings highlight both organizational and social barriers that influence youth engagement within the church, providing critical insight into areas that require strategic attention and intervention

*Table 4. Factors Affecting Youth Involvement in the Kigombe Seventh-day Adventist Church*

Factors	Interviewees	Frequency	%
Deficiency of Training	35	34	97.1
The insufficient availability of effective programs	35	33	94.2
Insufficient Adventist Youth Ministries materials	35	30	85.7
The lack of teachers	35	28	80
Impact of the Digital Era and Peer Pressure	35	25	71.4
Lack of Monitoring	35	21	60
Lack of Encouragement and Motivation	35	18	51.5
Lack of competent Leadership	35	14	40
A lack of a spirit of delegation and generational conflict.	35	13	37.1
Experiencing an inferiority complex	35	12	34.2



*Figure 3. Key Factors that Hinder Youth Involvement*

The data analysis reveals that **ten key variables** impede the spiritual development of youth in the Kigombe SDA Church. Each of these variables contributes differently to limiting youth participation, engagement, and overall spiritual growth. The following sections provide a detailed discussion of each factor.

### **Deficiency of Training**

For individuals to excel in any endeavor, adequate training is essential to prepare them for success. In the Kigombe SDA Church, the insufficient training of youth and their mentors has been a significant barrier to their involvement in the spiritual church's programs and activities. The Bible instructs us to raise our children in the right way, ensuring they do not stray from it as they grow (Prov 22:6). The lack of initiative from church leadership to train youth and youth leaders for active participation in church activities has contributed to this issue. Therefore, the church must prioritize regular training sessions for youth. This will foster their spiritual growth and engagement in church life. Church elders and officers should incorporate this initiative as a permanent fixture in the annual calendar of events to equip the youth with the necessary skills, ensure their continuous development, and enhance the overall vitality of the church.

For youth to actively participate in the church, it is vital to provide intentional training that will empower them to grow and serve more effectively. In doing so, the mentors are supposed to consider the reality of the Kigombe SDA Church. When youth are well-trained to contribute within their local church's context, they will be better positioned to support the church's growth physically and spiritually.

### **Lack of Competent Leadership**

Some leaders assigned to the youth department are not adequately qualified to lead effectively. They often fail to grasp the vision for the youth ministry, lack the necessary experience, exhibit only lukewarm commitment to the cause, and do not possess the essential qualities needed to guide young people within the church. These shortcomings hinder their effectiveness in ministering to the youth. They ultimately impact the spiritual growth and preparation of these young individuals for meaningful church involvement. When leaders are unqualified, they struggle to equip the youth for success in their spiritual lives and the mission of the church. Poor leadership can severely limit the youth's readiness for active participation in the church, which, in the long run, affects the entire congregation. Currently, the Kigombe Church faces a significant lack of effective leadership, particularly in the youth department, contributing to minimal spiritual growth.

### **Lack of Encouragement and Motivation**

Frequently, the elders of the church do not attend youth programs to provide encouragement and moral support. Instead of uplifting the youth, some leaders seem more focused on identifying their mistakes to take action against them. During annual youth ceremonies such as Global Youth Day and Pathfinder Day, it is rare to see many adults in attendance. This indicates a lack of interest from adults in the activities and involvement of the youth within the church. It is essential for church elders to actively participate in and support youth activities to gain insight into their strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, individuals tasked with leading youth activities often do not receive adequate encouragement and motivation from the church leadership. As a result, young members may be reluctant to engage in church spiritual programs.

### **Lack of a Spirit of Delegation and Generational Conflict**

Delegating authority and responsibility is crucial for fostering spiritual growth and commitment among young people within the church ministry. Another challenge hindering youth involvement and participation in the Kigombe Church is the reluctance of leaders to delegate responsibilities. Some youth leaders struggle to trust the young people they lead with shared responsibilities. Often stemming from a lack of trust, there is a fear that young individuals may underperform. Leaders could benefit from the wisdom found in Moses's father-in-law's advice to share responsibilities with young people based on their abilities. Exod. 18:21-26. Historically, Moses saw success when he engaged in the practice of delegation.

### **Insufficient Adventist Youth Ministries materials**

Adventist Youth resources are rare for young people in the Kigombe SDA Church. These materials are mostly written in English and other foreign languages, making it difficult for youth leaders to use them successfully. Many young leaders are not fluent in these languages, resulting in a lack of desire among those appointed to mentor youth in spirituality. Another concern is the level of interest among young people, notably adventurers and pathfinders. Honors and rewards motivate kids to do well and become interested in what they are studying. When these things become difficult to obtain, children lose interest and love for the cause.

### **Impact of the Digital Era and Peer Pressure**

The impact of technology plays a significant role in shaping the participation of young people in the Kigombe SDA Church. Exposure to television, newspapers, magazines, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram influences youth behavior.

Various events in their surroundings ultimately affect their engagement with the church community. Notice that the previous generations were not concerned with this issue. It came with technological facilities. The influence of friends and peers outside the church significantly hinders the youth's availability for church involvement. Today's young people often feel pressured to conform to the behavior of their non-church peers. Their social circles do not encourage them to engage in church-related matters.

### **Lack of Monitoring**

Based on personal observations and testimonies from interviewees, it appears that the Kigombe SDA Church leadership does not closely monitor youth activities. It results in a lack of oversight regarding the dynamics among the youth. The church shows limited interest in engaging in these activities. On the third Sabbath afternoon of each month, youth gather at the church for their programs; however, elders do not attend to oversee the initiatives of the church's future leaders. These young individuals will eventually become pastors, elders, deacons, and departmental directors within the congregation. Due to the lack of monitoring, they may be inclined to act based on their judgment. Overall, their activities tend to focus predominantly on entertainment, such as drills, rather than Bible study. To effectively involve and mentor the youth in the church, it is essential to monitor their activities, allowing the church to provide guidance and support for their spiritual development.

### **The Lack of Teachers to Mentor Youth in Their Age Groups**

On the afternoon of the third Sabbath, the goal is for youth to be instructed in classes tailored to their respective age groups—namely, Adventurers, Pathfinders, Ambassadors, and Young Adults. Unfortunately, this ideal is often unmet due to a

shortage of teachers. As a result, youth leaders frequently combine participants of different ages for lessons, which complicates comprehension. Mixing younger youth with older ones poses challenges, as their levels of understanding vary significantly. Individuals capable of leading progressive classes frequently do not participate in youth meetings, which further complicates the gradual transmission of holistic knowledge and doctrine of the church.

### **The Insufficient Availability of Effective Programs**

The survey conducted at Kigombe SDA Church revealed that the youth activities within the church do not adhere to any organized program. They rely instead on various initiatives from individual teachers. This lack of programs has been a significant obstacle to the spiritual growth of the youth in the church. As a result, many youth programs have devolved into mere entertainment. These fail to make a meaningful impact on the spirituality of the young people and lead adult congregants to overlook youth ministries. Consequently, this has hindered both the growth and spiritual engagement of the youth.

### **Experiencing an Inferiority Complex**

Many young people feel that they cannot contribute to the growth of the church. This perspective significantly affects their participation in church-related events and initiatives. As they perceive others as being more fortunate, they often refrain from actively engaging in most church activities and programs. To tackle the issue of low youth involvement in the Kigombe SDA Church, the next chapter will explore relevant initiatives.

In conclusion, various challenges hinder young people's involvement in the Kigombe SDA Church. However, there is optimism that the youth will strive for the

church's progress if provided with spiritual mentoring and empowerment. Consequently, active participation by the youth in church activities will significantly contribute to and reinforce the church's mission.

### **Summary**

This section presents a comprehensive overview of the Republic of Rwanda, examining its geographical, economic, demographic, and religious characteristics. Additionally, it provides a historical account of the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda, with particular attention to the local context of the Kigombe SDA Church. The chapter critically analyzes key factors that hinder the active engagement of youth within this church community. Given the importance of youth participation in fostering spiritual growth and reinforcing the church's mission, addressing these challenges is of paramount significance. Accordingly, the subsequent chapter outlines a structured study plan aimed at addressing these issues.

## CHAPTER 5

### INTERVENTION PROGRAM: PROGRAM DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

This chapter outlines the intervention program developed to address the challenge of mentoring youth for spirituality in the Kigombe SDA Church. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews and observations, the program was designed to equip leaders and teachers, foster youth engagement, and promote sustained spiritual growth.

The discussion presents the research design, program objectives, and rationale for the chosen methodology, followed by a description of program design, implementation, and phased activities. Finally, the chapter evaluates program outcomes, demonstrating significant improvements in youth participation and commitment, thereby affirming the effectiveness of structured mentoring initiatives within the church context.

#### **Research Design**

The challenge of mentoring youth for spirituality must be confronted to promote the spiritual growth of the church. This issue has lingered within the Kigombe SDA Church for many years. However, this does not mean that solutions are out of reach. Drawing from insights gleaned from interviews and personal observations, programs were developed and implemented to effectively address the problem of youth mentoring at the Kigombe SDA Church.

## **Program Objectives**

The program aimed to achieve the following objectives by its conclusion:

1. To deepen the understanding of the common challenges encountered by young individuals in fostering and sustaining their spiritual development within the context of the Kigombe SDA Church.
2. Provide training for the youth leadership team and teachers on how to effectively design their activities and programs to attract individuals who may initially lack interest in youth initiatives. By emphasizing thoughtful planning and execution, this approach will empower the youth to set clear goals for church activities, ultimately fostering greater engagement in spiritual pursuits.
3. To train and empower leaders and youth educators by utilizing specialized pedagogical methodologies designed for instructional contexts within the church. This approach will adapt the teachings and mentorship of young people to align with the evolving attitudes and priorities regarding spirituality and church involvement.
4. Empower the youth to be prepared and committed to serving both in the church and the wider community, thereby promoting spiritual growth within the congregation. This entails creating opportunities for young individuals to apply biblical principles and values essential for nurturing and sustaining their spirituality at the Kigombe SDA Church. They will also gain practical experience in effectively executing programs both inside and outside the church when the opportunity arises

## **Type of Research**

The project being studied is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to initiate a program that will support the Kigombe SDA Church in providing spiritual mentorship to youth. The research being done is qualitative, which means that it focuses on exploring and illustrating the decline of young people's spirituality and their lack of commitment to church activities. The relevance of the qualitative approach lies in its ability to collect data through various sources, including documents, interviews, and observations.<sup>1</sup> According to Leavy, qualitative research is "a way of learning about social reality,"<sup>2</sup> As a result, it is crucial to choose this kind of study since the results will be most fitting. The qualitative approach is used by the researcher since it gathers trustworthy data related to a social reality on youth spirituality.

## **The Rationale for Selection**

A variety of Kigombe local church members participated in the research. The researcher employed purposeful samples. People in purposeful samples were chosen based on a specific characteristic, with the intention of randomly including a balanced representation of all groups.<sup>3</sup> The study involved interviewing thirty-five individuals from the Kigombe SDA Church. The interviewees included the district pastor, elders, women leaders, and youth members. Only those who had been members of the church for five years or more were eligible for the study. The sample included almost equal numbers of males and females, and individuals were from all age groups. The district pastor guided in selecting the interview subjects.

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<sup>1</sup> Safary Wa-Mbaleka et al., *Qualitative Research for Practical Theology*, 160.

<sup>2</sup> Leavy, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>3</sup> VanderStoep and Johnston, *Research Methods for Everyday Life*, 198.

## **Instrumentation**

Since this subject is included in the action research, the researcher collaborated with Kigombe SDA Church members while conducting the study. This strategy is supported by Brammer and Chapman, who characterize action research as “an iterative process of research, action, and reflection guided by the leader with the participation of others in the situation to affect positive change in an individual or a group and to develop theoretical knowledge.”<sup>4</sup> The instrument used for this study is the interview protocol which guided us “to do an in-depth interview,”<sup>5</sup> Open-ended questions regarding the views, experiences, and observations of interview subjects are included in this guide paper. Briefly, the interview was a face-to-face question-and-answer process. The process involved the collection of qualitative data to explore the underlying factors contributing to a decline in spiritual engagement and reduced participation in church-related activities. Importantly, the participants actively contributed to the collaborative process of proposing potential solutions to address the observed phenomena.

## **Data Collection Methods**

The researcher served as the departmental director of the Kigombe SDA Church for five years (2011-2015) and currently holds the same position within the North Rwanda Conference, which encompasses the aforementioned church. To ensure objectivity and mitigate potential bias, the interview process was structured with careful consideration of the researcher’s prior observations. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher met with the participants to explain the purpose of the study

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<sup>4</sup> Safary Wa-Mbaleka et al., *Qualitative Research for Practical Theology*, 78.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

and to assure them of the confidentiality of their responses. The interviews were scheduled at mutually convenient times to accommodate the participants. Given that all participants were Rwandan nationals, the interviews were conducted in Kinyarwanda, the country's official language. Furthermore, only members of the Kigombe SDA Church were selected for participation, and all relevant data from these interviews were systematically analyzed.

### **Data Analysis**

Following the initial interview, a systematic data analysis was conducted. This preliminary analysis was instrumental in identifying potential challenges in data collection and in refining the methodological approach for subsequent data gathering. Additionally, the researcher adjusted the inquiry strategy and research direction to enhance the effectiveness of the data collection process, ensuring that the anticipated data was accurately obtained. Subsequently, quantitative methods are employed during the analysis stage to systematically measure responses, identify emerging patterns, and assess the potential effectiveness of the developed program.

### **Program Design, Preparation, and Implementation**

Before the program, a business meeting was held on Saturday afternoon, September 28, 2024, at the Kigombe SDA Church. The special invitations were extended to the district pastor, church leaders, youth leaders, as well as the youth and their parents. The primary goal of this assembly was to talk about the spiritual decline of young people, as demonstrated by the youth spiritual involvement trajectory data from 2016 to 2024. Additionally, addressed are typical obstacles that young people have when fostering and maintaining their spiritual development. The significance of the ongoing research was underscored, and each relevant party was encouraged to

actively engage in their respective roles. The leadership expressed enthusiasm about the upcoming programs. They knew that it aimed at revitalizing the spiritual well-being of young people and fostering their involvement in church activities. It was unanimously agreed that the programs would receive support from the leadership of the Kigombe SDA Church. The parents were committed to supporting their youth to get involved and to ensure that research meets its objectives.

The subsequent programs were systematically designed and executed to effectively tackle the challenge of mentoring youth for spirituality within the Kigombe SDA Church.

1. Translating and adapting the General Conference youth ministry curricula for a vibrant and dynamic learning experience.
2. Training and workshop of youth leaders on annual planning of activities for mentoring youth in spirituality
3. Selecting fourteen teachers and fourteen assistant teachers for the youth classes
4. A training and workshop on the application of teaching methodologies for a selected group of 28 individuals responsible for youth classes.
5. The categorization of youth based on their developmental stages, specifically age cohorts, to form 14 classes of teaching and mentoring.
6. Organizing weekend activities alongside the implementation of structured teaching and mentoring classes.

7. Facilitating the engagement of youth in a transformative experiential learning process.

- Participation in the Third Sabbath Program:
- Week of Spiritual Emphasis
- Harvest ingathering experience
- Community service practices

8. Personal Spiritual Assessment sheet

### **The Setting of the Program**

The program was predominantly conducted within the confines of the Kigombe SDA Church. It functioned as the principal venue for nearly all associated activities. All necessary facilities for the program were readily available on-site. The program was designed to be inclusive, inviting not only the youth from the church but also encouraging the participation of adults. This approach fostered a sense of community engagement, rendering the program accessible to all individuals interested in taking part. The program's framework was meticulously constructed to guarantee that all participants would derive significant benefits from the overall experience.

### **The Implementation of the Program**

The program was executed systematically, comprising eight distinct phases.

#### **Phase One**

Translating and adapting the General Conference youth ministry curricula for a vibrant and dynamic learning experience: The adaptation and translation of curricula developed by the General Conference's youth ministry is a critical process for cultivating engaging and dynamic educational experiences for youth. The unknown language must be subject to interpretation to serve the collective understanding and

welfare of the congregation (1 Cor 14; 12-13). This duty enhances content relevance and facilitates effective learning outcomes tailored to the diverse needs of youth participants. A recent survey identified limited access to guiding materials for youth leaders, particularly those published exclusively in original languages, as a significant barrier to effective spiritual mentorship. This constraint impedes the utilization of invaluable programs provided by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which are designed to foster the development of committed Christian youth. Given the identified limitation, the translation of General Conference youth ministry materials, especially the age-specific curricula, has been prioritized to enhance accessibility and educational resonance with diverse youth populations.

Translation is a serious responsibility that should be entrusted only to those with wisdom, experience, spiritual insight, and a deep understanding of the message being conveyed.<sup>6</sup> To facilitate this task, a collaborative team comprising six individuals with experience in youth ministry and dedication was assembled. This team undertook the meticulous translation of selected resources into the local language, ensuring authentic and meaningful conveyance of core messages and teachings. This collaborative endeavor aimed to equip youth leaders with the necessary tools to guide the spiritual development and community engagement of the youth population. The translation process, conducted between September 1st and 27th, 2024, spanned 28 days.

It is important to note that the translation project focused on specific sections summarizing the youth classes program, rather than encompassing all available texts. The translation project encompassed a specific selection of youth ministry resources,

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<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 363.

including the Companion Achievement Class, Friend Achievement Class, Explorer Achievement Class, Ranger Achievement Class, Voyager Achievement Class, Guide Achievement Class, Ambassador Resources Manual, Little Lamb Instructor Manual, Early Bird Instructor Manual, Busy Bee Instructor Manual, Sunbeam Instructor Manual, Builder Instructor Manual, and Helping Hand Instructor Manual. These translated materials provide essential pedagogical guidelines and frameworks designed to support effective educational practices within their respective programmatic context.

## **Phase Two**

Training and workshops for youth leaders on the annual planning of activities: The present program is designed to develop youth leadership efficacy through structured training and workshops, focusing on strategic annual planning. The primary aim is to foster mentorship competencies among youth leaders, specifically in the area of spiritual guidance. The program seeks to promote holistic youth development and enhance community engagement by providing leaders with the requisite skills and knowledge. The implementation of collaborative planning methodologies aims to empower youth leaders to create enriching and impactful experiences for the youth they mentor, thereby strengthening community growth.

To do it, a two-day workshop was organized on the first weekend of October 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The Karinzi Adventist High School served as the venue for a workshop. A total of forty-one individuals, including master guides, senior youth leaders, and elders, attended. The district pastor was also there. In addition to those officially invited, the workshop was open to all church members interested in youth ministry.

The workshop focused on “The Role of Planning in Mentoring Youth for Spirituality.” The workshop program encompassed the following key areas: (1) A devotional session centered on the theme ‘Sit Down First and Count the Cost’ (Luke 14:28-30); (2) An analysis of observed changes and trends in youth attitudes and priorities regarding spirituality and church engagement from 2016 to 2024; (3) An examination of the importance of spiritual mentorship for youth within the Kigombe SDA Church; (4) An introduction to the principles of planning and programming; (5) A discussion on the significance of follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation by church leadership; and (6) The development of planning and programming strategies for the year 2025

Participants received the workshop agenda one week prior to the event, facilitating pre-workshop preparation and familiarization with the intended topics and activities (see Appendix A). Following the two-day workshop, attendees were provided with printed copies of the Annual Plan, designed to serve as a comprehensive resource for mentoring youth in local church settings, thereby promoting spiritual development and engagement. The workshop program was implemented as planned, adhering to the established outline. A trimestral evaluation report for the initiative is scheduled for publication on March 31, June 30, and September 30, 2025. Amendments to the Annual Plan may be considered in December 2025, after the annual youth leadership evaluation session at the Kigombe SDA Church. The program’s effectiveness was validated by testimonials from participating elders and youth leaders, who advocated for regular training sessions to enhance youth preparedness for leadership and other church responsibilities.

### Phase Three

Selecting fourteen teachers and fourteen assistant teachers for the youth program: The selection process involved identifying fourteen able educators and fourteen assistant educators for the youth program, aimed at equipping them with a comprehensive and holistic body of knowledge. The church should prioritize finding a team of mentors ready to devote time and energy to creating and sustaining a youth program.<sup>7</sup> The selection process for identifying able and passionate individuals to mentor youth in spirituality is grounded in a collaborative approach. This initiative was driven by the youth themselves, who expressed their concerns regarding existing programs. The Kigombe SDA Church board subsequently validated their feedback through a comprehensive individual assessment of the proposed candidates. Involving the youth in this process ensures that their voices are heard and promotes their active participation in the program's implementation. This significant exercise took place on Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2025. The table below delineates the qualifications and backgrounds of the instructors and their assistants involved in youth mentorship at Kigombe SDA Church.

Table 5 presents the educational background of youth teachers at Kigombe SDA Church. The data categorize instructors according to their origin, and the levels of formal education they have attained.

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<sup>7</sup> Youth Department and Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Pastor's and Elder's Handbook for Youth Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2002), 18.

*Table 5. Youth Teachers' Educational Background*

No	Instructor origin	Numbers	Degree
1	Master guides	4	BA
		10	High school certificate
2	Senior youth leaders	1	BA
		5	High school certificate
3	Church elders	1	BA
		1	High school certificate
4	Women leaders	1	BA
		5	High school certificate

#### **Phase Four**

The training and workshop for 28 individuals responsible for youth mentoring at the Kigombe SDA Church: A training session and workshop held for the selected group of 28 individuals involved in youth mentoring at the Kigombe SDA Church. The focus was on the application of effective teaching methodologies. Ellen G. White argues in favor of this theory by saying that the person tasked with teaching young children must master the proper methods and develop tact.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, this initiative aimed to enhance pedagogical skills and promote best practices in instruction within the context of youth ministry. The theme of the training and workshop was “Nurturing Kids to Unlock Their Spiritual Potential.” The key topics that have been discussed include: 1. Devotion: Train up a child in the way he should go (Prov 22:6). 2. Orientation for Spiritual Mentoring at the Kigombe SDA Church 3. What does a child need during his spiritual mentoring? 4. What do parents ask regarding the spiritual guidance of their child? 5. An Effective Approach to Integrating Technology into Teaching for Today’s Learners. 6. Designing a lesson. 7. Approaches and methods to learning and teaching. 8. Practicing the lesson (See Appendix B).

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<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1954), 31.

The location for this program was Karinzi Adventist High School, and it took place from November 1 to 3, 2024. The workshop and training concluded with excitement for the upcoming tasks, including applying the various abilities acquired.

### **Phase Five**

The categorization of youth based on their developmental stages, specifically age cohorts used to form classes for teaching and mentoring: The SDA's General Conference, particularly its *Church Manual* book, clearly states that the church works for and with its youth through the Adventist Youth Society. The youth ministry strives to develop young people's mental, spiritual, and physical aspects to lure them into activities that will bring them closer to the church and train them for Christian service.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, when the church finds it necessary to teach and apply biblical values to the youth of its generation, it must have a defined structure that will help to guarantee its power of durability and pass from that generation to the next. Thus, the SDA Church's working policy mandates that local youth church groups mentor their youth to attract, develop, and retain young people in the church. It is well established that local churches can effectively raise awareness of educational prejudice through groups, particularly smaller ones.<sup>10</sup> These groups include Adventist Youth Society (ages 22 to 30), Ambassador club (15 to 21), Pathfinder clubs (10 to 15), and Adventurer club (6 to 9 years).<sup>11</sup> Since 2013, the Adventurer Club's mentorship program has been expanded to include two additional age-based cohorts, specifically those aged four and five years. The youth church organization plans to train and

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<sup>9</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (2016), 100-101.

<sup>10</sup> Nicole Baker Fulgham, *Educating All God's Children: What Christians Can—and Should—Do to Improve Public Education for Low-income Kids* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2013), 138.

<sup>11</sup> *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists* (2012), 350.

instruct young people in age-appropriate sessions, particularly for the Pathfinder and Adventurer clubs. To ensure appropriate instruction aligned with their assumed equivalent comprehension levels, the AYC and Ambassador groups will attend their respective classes according to the schedule implemented at the Kigombe SDA Church, based on the SDA General Conference guidelines.

Table 6 presents the youth classes at Kigombe SDA Church organized by age groups and club categories. The Table 6 details the specific age ranges, class names, and the number of students in each group.

*Table 6. Youth Classes Based on Age at the Kigombe Seventh-day Adventist Church*

Club	No	Age	Name	Students
Adventurer	1	4	Little Lamb	49
	2	5	Early Bird	38
	3	6	Busy Bee	35
	4	7	Sunbeam	28
	5	8	Builders	24
	6	9	Helping Hands	26
Pathfinder	7	10	Friend	29
	8	11	Companion	31
	9	12	Explorer	19
	10	13	Ranger	27
	11	14	Voyager	23
	12	15	Guide	16
Ambassador	13	16-21	Ambassadors	49
Adventist Youth Society	14	22-30	Young adults	39
<b>Total</b>				<b>433</b>

## **Phase Six**

Organizing weekend school activities: This phase is crucial since it relates to the mentee's interaction with the mentor. Transactional contact alone is insufficient for mentoring. It transcends this and turns into a heart-to-heart encounter. In other

words, mentoring can remarkably support effective Christian life and personal transformation because of the sacred bond between the mentor and mentee.<sup>12</sup>

The school preserves the traditional perspective of guiding young people toward spirituality. According to the Bible, there were schools of prophets throughout Samuel's time. These schools were available to any youth who wanted to learn more about the scriptures, delve deeper into the mysteries of God's kingdom, and seek wisdom from above so that they could become a teacher in Israel one day. The earliest to be established were in Ramah and Kirjath-jearim, Letter on Jericho, Bethel, Samaria, and Gilgal.<sup>13</sup> The Kigombe SDA Church has implemented a youth development program, modeled after the prophetic school tradition, to address perceived educational and mentorship deficits among its young members. This initiative, formally approved by the church board on December 20, 2024, comprises structured, age-stratified classes designed to foster holistic youth development across spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual domains.

The program's annual activity plan, operational from January to December 2025, mandates weekly instructional sessions held every Saturday from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Preceding the program's commencement, there were preparatory measures, including the development of an annual plan, leaders and teachers training, warrant engagement with church leadership and parents.

Student progress is evaluated through formal examinations, the results of which are used to determine awards and honors allocation and grade promotion. Successful completion of the annual program culminates in the issuance of graduation

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<sup>12</sup> Rick Lewis, *Mentoring Matters: Building Strong Christian Leaders, Avoiding Burnout, Reaching the Finishing Line* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2009), 27.

<sup>13</sup> Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923), 96-97.

certificates, facilitating student advancement to the subsequent age-appropriate cohort. The curriculum and evaluation framework are designed to encourage the application of biblical principles in daily life and to reinforce the Bible as a foundational element of faith and personal development.

### **Phase Seven**

This phase is related to the experiential learning process since it involves students in active involvement by transforming classroom information into practical schemes in real-world contexts. Instead of listening to the instructor explain how to do something, students seize the opportunity to learn by doing it themselves and then reporting on their experiences. Such an encounter provides youngsters with insights and comprehension that are difficult to grasp theoretically. Experiential learning is thought to be very beneficial for development because of its outcomes.<sup>14</sup> To accomplish this, five activities are carried out at Kigombe SDA Church.

**Participation in the Third Sabbath Programs.** Before January 2025, youth engagement within Kigombe SDA Church was primarily limited to participation in annual international events such as Global Youth Day and Pathfinder Day. This resulted in a perceived lack of sustained youth involvement in regular Sabbath activities and a general absence of intrinsic motivation outside of these designated events.

To address this concern, the church established a monthly youth-led Sabbath initiative, starting on the third Sabbath of January 2025. This designated the third Sabbath of each month as a platform for youth ministries. This initiative involved the comprehensive integration of youth into all pre- and afternoon program components.

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<sup>14</sup> James R. Davis and Bridget Arend, *Facilitating Seven Ways of Learning: A Resource for More Purposeful, Effective, and Enjoyable College Teaching* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 246.

Specifically, youth were empowered to lead Sabbath School programs, deliver sermons, offer pastoral and benediction prayers, and manage other liturgical activities under the mentorship of church elders. This intervention aimed to facilitate the practical application of previously adult-led activities by the youth. Preliminary observations indicate a notable increase in youth motivation and the manifestation of previously unobserved spiritual skills. Church leadership has expressed interest in conducting a systematic evaluation to assess the congruence between the achieved outcomes and the initial program implementation expectations.

**Week of Spiritual Focus.** A Week Dedicated to Spiritual Reflection and Growth was held at the Kigombe SDA Church from 5-11 January 2025, focusing on empowering youth to discern their roles within the church community. Guided by the theme ‘Let no man despise your youth’ (1 Tim 4:12), the week featured exclusively youth-led events. A designated youth speaker presented evening, supported by a youth program coordinator, scripture reader, and prayer leader. The specific topics covered during the week are documented below. (see Appendix C).

First evening: “Unlocking Your Worth: Overcoming Self-Doubt as a Young Person” (1 Tim 4:12)

Second evening: “The Crossroads of Youth: Joy, Freedom, and Faithful Living”. (Eccl 11:9-10)

Third evening: “Youth as Agents of Change: Unleashing Your Potential for God’s Kingdom.” (1 Sam 17:45-46)

Fourth evening: Small Beginnings, Monumental Change: The Legacy of King Josiah” (2 Kgs 22:1-2)

Fifth evening: “Conquering Fear: Developing Essential Qualities in Youth (Josh 1:5-8)”

Sixth evening: Mutual Abiding: The Dynamics of Youth and God's Presence (Dan 1:4-8)

Sabbath day: Divine service: The Impact of Humble Service: Discovering Your Role in God's Work" (2 Kgs 5:1-14).

The Kigombe SDA Church concluded its Week of Spiritual Reflection and Growth with a vibrant Sabbath afternoon ceremony, celebrating the youth's participation. Testimonies revealed the young people's renewed joy, commitment, and eagerness to serve. The program, designed to educate, inspire, and motivate, effectively equipped the youth for active involvement in church growth, emphasizing biblical principles, the Spirit of Prophecy, and impactful narratives.

**Harvest ingathering experience.** The harvest ingathering campaign, a Seventh-day Adventist initiative aimed at community engagement and financial support (rooted in Exod 3:21-22),<sup>15</sup> has elicited negative bias from some youth within the Kigombe SDA Church. These young members express feelings of being underestimated and treated with disregard while participating in the campaign. Understanding and addressing these concerns is essential for fostering a sense of inclusion and ensuring the campaign aligns with the church's values.

A 2016-2023 trend analysis revealed a concerning low youth engagement rate of 2.1% projected for 2024, highlighting a sensitive issue for the church. To address this, a harvest-ingathering program was implemented on Sunday, February 9th, 2025. Working in pairs and carrying authorization from the Rwanda Governance Board, 70 young people successfully collected 162 kg of corn, 15 kg of sorghum, 7 kg of beans, and 7,100 Rwandan Francs. The program's success stemmed not primarily from the

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<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD : Review and Herald, 2002), 167.

collected resources, but from the high youth participation, resulting in increased enthusiasm and a commitment to future involvement.

**Community service practices.** In alignment with the principles of mercy and compassion illustrated in the Good Samaritan parable (Luke 10:30-37), the youth of the Kigombe SDA Church conducted a charitable outreach on Global Youth Day, March 15, 2024. They delivered 803,000 Rwandan Francs worth of goods, including food, soaps, hygiene products, diapers, and children's apparel, to the pediatric department of Ruhengeri Referral Hospital. In addition to the material goods, the Kigombe SDA Church facilitated the distribution of 100 copies of 'The Great Controversy' to patients, caregivers, and staff at Ruhengeri Referral Hospital. This initiative, beyond the provision of tangible aid, demonstrates a holistic approach to community engagement. The hospital administration and staff acknowledged the church's dual contribution, expressing appreciation for both the material support and the dissemination of religious literature. The positive feedback underscores the perceived significance of this dual contribution, indicating a favorable response to the church's integrated approach to community outreach.

### **Phase Eight**

Personal Spiritual Assessment Sheet (PSAS): Drawing upon the introspective directive in 2 Corinthians 13:5, where the Apostle Paul advocates for self-examination regarding faith adherence, the Kigombe SDA Church youth developed the PSAS. This assessment tool was designed to facilitate individual evaluation of spiritual development, community engagement, and alignment with established church doctrines and values. The PSAS aims to provide a structured framework for individuals to assess their spiritual practices and contributions to community development and identify areas for both spiritual strengths and potential growth. This

guideline document underwent a collaborative development and approval process with the Kigombe SDA Church youth, ensuring its relevance and applicability to their specific context.

The PSAS is designed for biannual administration, occurring at the end of June and December each year. The assessment instrument, designed for self-administration, utilizes clear, accessible language, rendering it comprehensible to any youth who knows to read and write. (See Appendix D). Upon completion, participants submit their responses to the youth leader via an anonymized protocol. The youth leader then evaluates the submitted data to identify areas of individual spiritual development requiring reinforcement. This analysis informs the development of targeted interventions aimed at enhancing youth spiritual growth. Subsequently, the youth leader is required to present a synthesis report to the church board, detailing program execution progress, identified gaps, and any necessary support from the church. The church leadership has affirmed the potential for broader application of the PSAS, recognizing its relevance to the entire church community, not solely the youth demographic.

### **Program Evaluation**

To evaluate the efficacy of the program in fostering youth spiritual development and church engagement, a post-implementation assessment was undertaken. This assessment, conducted via a survey on May 1-2, 2025, at the Kigombe SDA Church, aimed to determine the program's success in meeting its intended goals. Data collection involved both qualitative interviews and comparative analysis of reports from before and after the program's implementation. Evaluation results indicated significantly increased youth participation in church spiritual activities and reduced barriers to spiritual development. Increased attendance and

application of knowledge demonstrated enhanced spiritual growth. Collaborative efforts between youth leaders, parents, and church leaders contributed to program goals. Comparative survey analysis revealed statistically significant differences in youth participation post-implementation.

Table 7 and Figure 4 present a comparative analysis of youth spiritual participation at Kigombe SDA Church between 2024 and 2025. The data highlight the number and percentage of youth engaged in various church activities. This comparison provides insight into the effectiveness of recent youth engagement initiatives and helps identify areas for continued focus and program enhancement within the church's AYM.

*Table 7. Comparative Indicators of Youth Spiritual Participation at Kigombe Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2024 and 2025*

Indicators	Database	2024	2025
Attendance in SS groups	433	234(54%)	364(84%)
Mid-week prayer meeting	433	31(7%)	173(40%)
Tithe giving	433	52(12%)	108(25%)
Harvest ingathering	433	9(2,1%)	78(18%)
Youth week of prayer	433	82(19%)	(346)80%
Community services	433	28(6,5%)	294(68%)
Organized international youth celebration days	433	108(25%)	368(85%)
Gospel music concert attendance	433	390(90%)	390(90%)
Daily Bible reading	433	13(3%)	208(48%)

Source: Kigombe SDA Church, *AYM Departmental report (Jan-March/2025)*

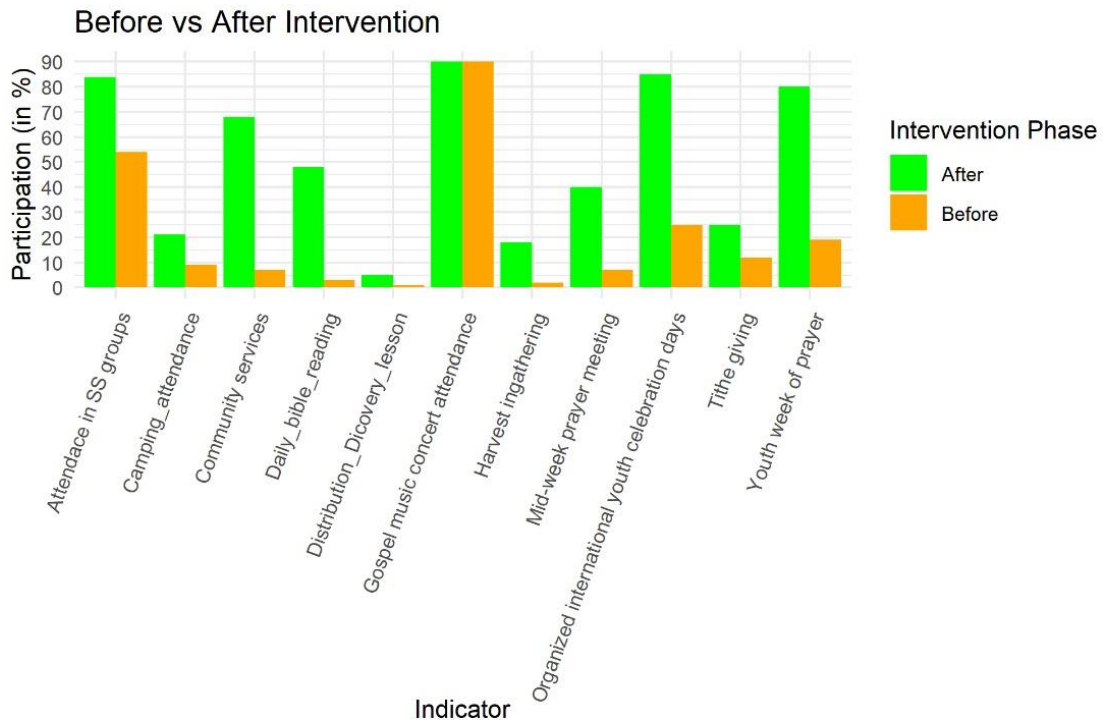


Figure 4. The percentage participation levels for each indicator.

The analysis revealed a significant difference in mean participation levels before and after the intervention. Prior to implementation, youth engagement in church activities was noticeably lower, reflecting limited interest and involvement. Following the introduction of the youth mentorship program, participation levels increased substantially, suggesting that the initiative was effective in motivating and enabling greater involvement. A paired t-test confirmed that this difference was statistically significant, with a mean increase of 30.45% ( $t(10) = 4.33, p = 0.0015$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranged from 14.79% to 46.12%, indicating that the observed improvement is unlikely due to random variation. These findings demonstrate that the intervention had a measurable and positive impact on participation, while also highlighting the need for continued support to sustain progress.

Further analysis of participation trends indicated a positive trajectory in youth engagement across multiple church activities. Statistically significant increases were

observed in Sabbath School attendance, youth-led events, and community service initiatives. Although areas such as mid-week prayer meetings, harvest ingathering, and tithing demonstrated initial growth, further development remains necessary. Notably, the consistently high attendance at gospel concerts suggests a potential link between musical events and sustained youth engagement. Collectively, these results suggest that the Kigombe SDA Church is moving towards a stronger culture of youth involvement in both spiritual development and church-related responsibilities.

To complement these findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifteen participants from Kigombe Church, including five elders, five parents, and five youth members. Across all groups, interviewees unanimously confirmed a positive correlation between the program's implementation and increased youth participation, engagement, and spiritual growth. Elders and parents emphasized the transformative role of mentorship and training, while youth participants expressed appreciation for opportunities to contribute meaningfully to church life.

One elder reflected: *"I have noticed that the young spiritual involvement in the church can be ascribed to the fact that the majority of the youth did not know what to do. A positive transformation occurred as a result of the mentorship and training they received. The elders were not paying attention to the youth ministry or their spiritual needs."*

A parent remarked: *"Thank God for this program. It should be endorsed by the Kigombe SDA Church and reproduced throughout the district and conference. In doing so, I am confident that our young men and women in the church will not sit idle when they are expected to do something for the church."*

Youth testimonies also highlighted the program's impact: *"Thank you for this program, which I believe has illuminated all of our gaps in spiritual growth and*

*God's mission to progress. Thank God that the majority of our elders were present to study and observe what we as youngsters can do to better our spirituality and work alongside adults to accomplish God's purpose. I commit to participating in all church events to promote the church's spirituality."*

These testimonies provide strong qualitative evidence that the mentorship initiative effectively addressed gaps in youth ministry and created an enabling environment for active participation in church activities.

### **Chapter Summary**

In summary, the youth mentorship program implemented at Kigombe SDA Church represents a structured and dynamic initiative that has fostered significant improvements in youth participation and spiritual growth. Through its multi-faceted approach—incorporating mentorship, organized activities, and systematic evaluation—the program has demonstrated both measurable outcomes and community-wide impact. Statistical analyses confirm significant gains in participation, while qualitative feedback highlights increased confidence, ownership, and motivation among youth. The initiative has not only strengthened the role of young people in church life but also provided a replicable model for broader application within the district and conference.

Table 8 presents the correlation between identified challenges and proposed interventions for the Youth Spiritual Mentorship Program at Kigombe SDA Church. The table links ten key challenges affecting youth engagement with specific intervention strategies, relevant solutions documented in literature, and scriptural or doctrinal references. By aligning each challenge with targeted programs, the table provides a comprehensive framework for addressing obstacles to youth spiritual development. This correlation highlights the systematic approach used to strengthen

youth mentorship, ensuring that solutions are evidence-based, biblically grounded, and practically applicable within the church context.

Table 8. Correlation between Identified Challenges to the Youth Spiritual Mentorship Program

No	Factors	Intervention program	Solution in literature	Reference
1	Deficiency of Training	-Training and workshop for youth leaders and teachers of youth classes	Luke 14:28-30; 2 Timothy 2:2; Ephesians 4:11-12; Proverbs 27:17; Proverbs 21:5	P87, P90
2	Lack of competent Leadership	-Training and workshop for youth leaders	2 Timothy 2:2; Ephesians 4:11,12; Proverbs 27:17	P87
3	Lack of Encouragement and Motivation	-Transformative experiential learning process: Community service	Luke 10:30-37; Matthew 25:31-46	P97
4	Lack of Monitoring	-Training and workshop for youth leaders: The significance of follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation of the program by the church's leadership -Personal Spiritual Assessment sheet (PSAS)	Acts 14:21-22, Corinthians 13:5	P87, Appendix A  P97, Appendix D
5	The lack of teachers	-Selecting fourteen teachers and fourteen assistant teachers.  -Training fourteen teachers and fourteen assistant teachers.  -Formation of classes for teaching and mentoring	<i>Seventh-day Adventist Pastor's and Elder's Handbook for Youth Ministry</i> , 18; Titus 1:5; White, <i>Child Guidance</i> , 31; <i>Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual</i> , 100-101; Fulgham, <i>Educating All God's Children</i> , 138. <i>Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists</i> , 350; Lewis, <i>Mentoring Matters</i> , 27; White, <i>Fundamentals of Christian Education</i> , 96-97; 2 Kings 2:3	P 89  P 90  P91

(table continues)

Table 8 (continued). Correlation between Identified Challenges to the Youth Spiritual Mentorship Program

6	The insufficient availability of effective programs	Training and workshop for youth leaders: Planning and programming for the year 2025	Proverbs 15:22; Luke 14:28	P 87 Appendix A
7	Experiencing an inferiority complex	Transformative experiential learning process: Participation in the Third Sabbath Programs, Community service practices, Harvest ingathering experience, Week of Spiritual Focus	<i>Facilitating Seven Ways of Learning</i> , 246; <i>Christian Service</i> , 167; Exodus 3:21-22; Luke 10:30-37; Matthew 25:31-46	P94-97
8	Insufficient Adventist Youth Ministries materials	Translating and adapting the General Conference youth ministry curricula	<i>Evangelism</i> , 362-4; <i>Testimonies for the Church</i> , 6:323; 1 Corinthians 14:12-13	P85
9	A lack of a spirit of delegation and a generational complex	Transformative experiential learning process: Participation in the third Sabbath programs, week of spiritual focus	Exodus 18:17-23; Titus 1:5; Numbers 11:16-17; 2 Timothy 2:2	P 94-95 Appendix C
10	Impact of the Digital Era and Peer Pressure	Training of fourteen teachers and fourteen assistant teachers: An Effective Approach to Integrating Technology into Teaching for Today's Learners.	Daniel 12:4; <i>Review and Herald</i> , October 24, 1878; <i>Review and Herald</i> , October 3, 1912	P90 Appendix B

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter summarizes the study's key findings on youth mentorship and spiritual development at the Kigombe SDA Church. It emphasizes the importance of structured mentorship in fostering youth participation, spiritual growth, and leadership preparation. The analysis highlights the need to address barriers to engagement and invest intentionally in spiritual education. Practical recommendations are offered for church leaders and youth to strengthen mentorship, promote active involvement, and support a vibrant, sustainable church community.

#### **Summary**

The effectiveness of youth within the Kigombe SDA Church is contingent upon their spiritual mentorship and training for service both within and beyond the church community. Scripture underscores the importance of early spiritual training, as stated in Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." For the church to experience sustained growth and development, particular attention must be given to the spiritual and leadership formation of young members. The Spirit of Prophecy highlights the necessity of nurturing and organizing youthful talent, emphasizing that well-trained youth are essential to the church's mission.<sup>1</sup> Effective mentorship fosters the development of

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<sup>1</sup> White, *Christian Service*, 30.

noble character, promotes a spirit of universal kindness, and encourages fair judgment, thereby preventing misinterpretation of others' words and actions. The investment in such guidance yields long-term spiritual benefits<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, spiritual mentorship plays a crucial role in engaging youth in the church's mission, as outlined in Matthew 28:18-20. In the contemporary context, the active involvement of young people is particularly critical in all church departments to prepare them for both salvation and service. However, findings from this study indicate that youth have not been adequately mentored in spiritual matters, which has adversely affected their participation in church activities. Several factors contribute to this deficiency, including inadequate training, the lack of effective programs, the limited availability of Adventist Youth Ministries materials, a shortage of qualified teachers, the influence of the digital era and peer pressure, insufficient monitoring, a lack of encouragement and motivation, ineffective leadership, the absence of delegation, generational conflicts, and issues related to inferiority complexes. Addressing these challenges is crucial to cultivating a spiritually vibrant and actively engaged youth within the church. To tackle this, a comprehensive program has been implemented in eight distinct phases.

Phase One involved the adaptation and translation of General Conference youth ministry curricula. This process was deemed crucial for enhancing the relevance and efficacy of educational experiences for youth, addressing the identified barrier of limited access to materials in the local language. Phase Two centered on the development of youth leadership efficacy through structured training and workshops. This session emphasized strategic annual planning and the cultivation of mentorship

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<sup>2</sup> White, *Gospel Workers*, 334.

competencies, particularly in spiritual guidance. Phase Three detailed the selection of fourteen teachers and fourteen assistant teachers. This process prioritized identifying capable and passionate individuals to mentor youth in spirituality. The selection was driven by youth feedback, validated by the church board, and involved a comprehensive assessment of candidates. Phase four consisted of a training session and workshop for the selected mentors, focusing on the application of effective teaching methodologies. This initiative aimed to enhance pedagogical skills and promote best practices in instruction within the context of youth ministry. Phase Five described the categorization of youth into age cohorts to facilitate age-appropriate instruction and mentorship. This structure, aligned with SDA General Conference guidelines, involved the formation of classes based on developmental stages, including Adventurer, Pathfinder, Ambassador, and Adventist Youth Society groups. Phase Six focused on organizing weekend school activities. This phase emphasized the importance of the mentor-mentee relationship, moving beyond transactional contact to foster transformative, heart-to-heart connections. Phase Seven detailed the facilitation of experiential learning. It aimed to engage youth through the practical application of classroom learning, such as Participation in the Third Sabbath Programs, Week of Spiritual Focus, Harvest Ingathering Experience, and Community Service Practices. Phase Eight described the implementation of the Personal Spiritual Assessment Sheet (PSAS). This tool, adopted by the church, facilitated individual evaluation of spiritual development, community engagement, and alignment with church doctrines.

Mentoring youth in spirituality plays a pivotal role in the growth and sustainability of the church. According to prophecy, the Lord has designated young

people as His helping hand,<sup>3</sup> emphasizing their significance in advancing His work. In the context of Kigombe SDA Church, leadership must prioritize integrating youth into various church programs and activities, both within and beyond the church premises. Ensuring that young members understand their roles and responsibilities fosters a sense of belonging and spiritual fulfillment. Active participation not only enables them to experience the blessings associated with church involvement but also strengthens their commitment to the faith. By engaging youth in meaningful church activities, leaders can cultivate a sense of purpose and responsibility, thereby enhancing retention and long-term dedication to the church community.

The Kigombe SDA Church's program evaluation showed that the mentoring youth program successfully increased their participation and spiritual growth. Data from reports and interviews with church members confirmed these positive outcomes. The consistent implementation of the program is expected to significantly contribute to the spiritual development of young individuals, fostering their active engagement in church life. Furthermore, youth must take deliberate and conscientious steps toward their spiritual mentorship. In alignment with Hebrews 2:1, they must remain vigilant in their commitment to spiritual growth, ensuring they do not waver or become complacent in their faith journey.

### **Conclusion**

In summation, it is imperative to recognize that the youth within the ecclesiastical body are not merely passive observers. They are not relegated to the periphery of congregational life, presuming that spiritual maturation is solely the purview of adult members. The prevailing paradigm necessitates a decisive shift,

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<sup>3</sup> White, *Christian Service*, 30.

wherein the church actively dismantles all impediments that currently restrict the youth from transitioning from spectatorship to active participation across the multifaceted dimensions of church engagement.

To facilitate this transformation, the value of spiritual mentorship for the youth remains a salient and indispensable practice, both within the context of the Kigombe SDA Church and within any ecclesiastical setting. Furthermore, in the execution of church-sanctioned activities that integrate spiritual principles, the avoidance of age-based discrimination is paramount. This inclusive approach ensures that everyone is allowed to contribute his unique talents and energies towards the collective spiritual edification of the church.

It is therefore timely for the Kigombe SDA Church to strategically prioritize and invest in youth-centric activities, thereby broadening its focus beyond mere entertainment to encompass strong spiritual development programs. The prevailing sentiment among a significant portion of the youth, characterized by a sense of marginalization within the church structure, necessitates a proactive response. Consequently, the imperative to foster meaningful engagement of the youth in church activities and programs is underscored.

To proactively foster more substantive involvement of young individuals in both spiritual growth initiatives and broader church activities, the following recommendations are posited for consideration.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are offered for consideration and implementation by pastors, church elders, youth leaders, youth, and the general membership. In their execution, the Kigombe SDA Church will proactively address the identified challenges. It will foster a vibrant and engaging environment where

youth are actively mentored, meaningfully involved, and empowered to grow spiritually within the church community.

### **For Pastors**

1. **Champion Youth Ministry:** Actively and visibly champion the importance of youth ministry within the church's strategic priorities. This includes allocating time and providing vocal support for youth programs and initiatives.
2. **Prioritize Mentorship Training:** Facilitate and support regular training and development of effective youth mentors. This should encompass equipping individuals with the necessary skills and understanding of youth development and spiritual guidance.
3. **Integrate Youth in Leadership:** Actively seek opportunities to integrate young people into various church leadership roles and decision-making processes, providing them with platforms for voice and agency.
4. **Foster Intergenerational Dialogue:** Initiate and facilitate regular opportunities for meaningful intergenerational dialogue and interaction, creating spaces where youth voices are heard and valued by senior members of the church.
5. **Lead by Example:** Demonstrate a personal commitment to engaging with and mentoring young people, setting a positive example for the entire congregation.

### **For Church Elders**

1. **Establish Supportive Structures:** Establish clear structures and policies that support and facilitate youth ministry within the church, ensuring adequate resources and administrative backing.
2. **Encourage Mentors:** Actively encourage mentors for the youth, recognizing and appreciating their contributions.
3. **Provide Oversight and Guidance:** Offering guidance and oversight to youth leaders, ensuring that youth programs and their implementation align with the overall mission and values of the church.
4. **Promote Inclusive Practices:** Advocate for and promote inclusive practices within all church activities, ensuring that youth are not marginalized but are actively integrated into church life.
5. **Allocate Financial Resources:** Prioritize the allocation of financial resources towards youth programs and initiatives, recognizing the long-term investment in the spiritual development of the youth.

### **For Youth Leaders**

1. **Foster Mentoring Relationships:** Actively facilitate and nurture mentor-mentee relationships within the youth group, providing guidance and support to mentees.
2. **Empower Youth Involvement:** Create opportunities for youth to take ownership of programs and activities, fostering a sense of responsibility and belonging.
3. **Seek Feedback and Adapt:** Regularly seek feedback from the youth regarding their needs and interests, and be willing to adapt programs and approaches accordingly.

4. Collaborate with Church Leadership: Maintain open and collaborative communication with pastors and elders, ensuring alignment and seeking their support for youth initiatives.

### **For Members of the Church**

1. Offer Support and Encouragement: Provide consistent support and encouragement to the youth and their mentors, fostering a welcoming and supportive environment.
2. Participate in Youth Activities: Actively participate in youth-led activities and programs, demonstrating support and valuing their contributions.

### **For Youth Spiritual Growth**

1. Be Honest and Vulnerable: Share your genuine thoughts, feelings, and challenges with your mentor. A trusting and honest relationship are essential for effective spiritual guidance. Don't be afraid to be vulnerable.
2. Actively Participate in Mentorship Meetings: Come prepared for your meetings, and a willingness to engage in meaningful conversations.
3. Seek Guidance on Specific Issues: Don't hesitate to ask your mentor for guidance on specific challenges you are facing in your spiritual life, relationships, or decision-making.
4. Apply the Lessons Learned: Strive to put into practice the spiritual principles and advice you receive from your mentor in your daily life.
5. Be Patient: Spiritual growth is a journey. Be patient with yourself and trust the process. Your mentor is there to support you along the way.
6. Be a Positive Influence: Strive to be a positive and encouraging presence within the church community. Your enthusiasm can inspire others.

7. **Set Personal Spiritual Goals:** Reflect on your spiritual growth and identify areas where you'd like to improve. Discuss these goals with your mentor and work together to create a plan to achieve them.

### **For Youth Activities Engagement**

1. **Volunteer Your Time and Talents:** Offer your skills and abilities to serve in different capacities within the church. This could include music, ushering, preaching, Sabbath School teaching, or helping with community outreach.
2. **Attend Church Regularly and Participate Actively:** Make it a priority to attend Sabbath services, Sabbath School, and other church gatherings. Participate actively in worship, discussions, and fellowship.
3. **Be Open to New Experiences:** Step outside your comfort zone and try new things within the church. You might discover hidden talents or passions.

## APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A  
LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Theme: The Role of Planning in Mentoring Youth for Spirituality’  
Date: October 5th and 6th, 2024  
Venue: GS Karinzi

*Table A1. Schedule: Day 1*

Timeframe	Activity	Topic
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Registration & Welcome	-
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Opening Devotional	“ <i>Sit Down First and Count the Cost</i> ” (Luke 14:28-30)
9:30 AM - 10:45 AM	Lecture 1	An analysis of observed changes and trends in youth attitudes and priorities regarding spirituality and church engagement from 2016 to 2023
10:45 AM - 12:00 PM	Lecture 2	An examination of the importance of spiritual mentorship for youth within the Kigombe SDA Church
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch Break	-
1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	Lecture 3	An introduction to the principles of planning and programming;
2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Lecture 4	A discussion on the significance of follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation by church leadership
3:30 PM - 4:00 PM	Closing remarks	-

*Table A2. Schedule: Day 2*

Timeframe	Activity	Topic
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Devotion	<i>“Go to the ant and consider her ways” Prov 6:6</i>
9:00 AM - 10:45 AM	Lecture 5	Structuring a Mentorship Program: Planning for 2025
10:45 AM - 12:00 PM	Planning	The development of planning and programming strategies for the year 2025
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch Break	-
1:00 PM - 3:45 PM	Planning	The development of planning and programming strategies for the year 2025
3:45 PM - 4:30 PM	Bringing It All Together	Recap, Closing Remarks, Commitment, Certificates Distribution & Prayer

## APPENDIX B

### TRAINING OF YOUTH TEACHERS

Theme: Nurturing Kids to Unlock Their Spiritual Potential

Date: November 1 to 3, 2024

Venue: GS Karinzi

*Table B1.* Schedule: Day 1

Timeframe	Activity	Topic
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Registration & Welcome	-
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Opening Devotional	<i>Train up a child in the way he should go. (Proverbs 22:6)</i>
9:30 AM - 10:45 AM	Lecture 1	<i>Orientation for Spiritual Mentoring at Kigombe SDA Church</i>
10:45 AM - 12:00 PM	Lecture 2	<i>What is a parent asked regarding the spiritual guidance of his child?</i>
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch Break	-
1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	Lecture 2	<i>What does a child need during his spiritual mentoring?</i>
2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Workshop	Group discussions and report
3:30 PM - 4:00 PM	Closing session	Reflections & Closing Prayer

*Table B2. Schedule: Day 2*

Timeframe	Activity	Topic
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Devotion	<i>Elisha and the Mocking Youths 2 Kings 2:23</i>
9:00 AM - 10:45 AM	Lecture 3	<i>Approaches and Methods to Learning and Teaching</i>
10:45 AM - 12:00 PM	Lecture 4	<i>An Effective Approach to Integrating Technology into Instruction for Today's Learner</i>
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch Break	-
1:00 PM - 3:45 PM	Lecture 5	<i>Designing a Lesson</i>
3:45 PM - 4:30 PM	Closing session	Closing Remarks & Certificate Distribution and prayer

*Table B3. Schedule: Day 3*

Timeframe	Activity	Topic
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Devotion	Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are. Ps 127:3-5
9:00 AM - 1200 AM	Lecture 6	<i>Practicing the Lesson - Hands-on Workshop</i>
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch Break	-
1:00 PM - 3:45 PM	Lecture	<i>Practicing the Lesson - Hands-on Workshop</i>
3:45 PM - 4:15 PM	Closing session	End remarks and prayer

## APPENDIX C

### WEEK DEDICATED TO SPIRITUAL REFLECTION AND GROWTH

**Venue:** Kigombe SDA Church

**Duration:** One Week: 5-11 Jan, 2025

**Time:** Every Evening at 6:00 PM-7:00 PM

Date	Topic	Scripture reference
05 Jan 2025	<i>Unlocking Your Worth: Overcoming Self-Doubt as a Young Person</i>	1 Timothy 4:12
06 Jan 2025	<i>The Crossroads of Youth: Joy, Freedom, and Faithful Living</i>	Ecclesiastes 11:9-10
07 Jan 2025	<i>Youth as Agents of Change: Unleashing Your Potential for God's Kingdom</i>	Samuel 17:45-46
08 Jan 2025	Small Beginnings, Monumental Change: The Legacy of King Josiah”	2 Kings 22:1-2, 2 Chron 34:1-3
09 Jan 2025	Conquering Fear: Developing Essential Qualities in Youth	Joshua 1:5-8
10 Jan 2025	<i>Mutual Abiding: The Dynamics of Youth and God's Presence</i>	Dan 1:4-8
11 Jan 2025	<i>The Impact of Humble Service: Discovering Your Role in God's Work</i>	Kings 5:1-14

APPENDIX D

PERSONAL SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT SHEET

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**Part 1: Spiritual Practices**

Rate your involvement and growth in the following activities over the past 6 months. Use a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

**Prayer**

I regularly set aside time for personal prayer. [ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5

**Bible Reading**

I consistently read and reflect on Scripture. [ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5

**Worship Attendance**

I attend sabbath worship services and mid-week prayers regularly. [ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5 |

**Fellowship**

I participate in progressive classes and other youth's church gatherings. [ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5

**Serving Others**

I am actively involved in serving other believers or unbelievers. [ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5

**Giving**

I consistently give to support the church and its missions: Tithe, and different offerings. [ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5

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**Part 2: Personal Spiritual Growth**

Reflect on the following questions:

1. **How has your relationship with God deepened over the past month?**

○ \_\_\_\_\_

○ \_\_\_\_\_

2. **In what areas do you feel you have grown spiritually?**

○ \_\_\_\_\_

○ \_\_\_\_\_

3. **What areas do you feel need more attention or improvement in your spiritual life?**

○ \_\_\_\_\_

○ \_\_\_\_\_

4. **What steps will you take to continue growing spiritually in the next months?**

○ \_\_\_\_\_

○ \_\_\_\_\_

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**Part 3: Community and Church Life**

Evaluate your involvement and relationship within the church community.

**Church Community**

I feel a strong sense of belonging within the church family. [ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5

**Church Activities**

I actively engage in programs and activities in and out of the church. [ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5

**Relationship with Leaders**

I have a meaningful relationship with my leaders in the church [ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5

**Spiritual Accountability**

I have someone to hold me accountable for my spiritual growth. [ ]1 [ ]2 [ ]3 [ ]4 [ ]5

**Part 4: Personal Reflections**

1. **What challenges have you faced in your spiritual walk recently?**

○ \_\_\_\_\_

○ \_\_\_\_\_

2. **How have you seen God work in your life and the church these past months?**

○ \_\_\_\_\_

○ \_\_\_\_\_

3. **How can your church or ministry better support your spiritual growth?**

○ \_\_\_\_\_

○ \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 5: Goals for Next Semester**

Set spiritual goals for the coming months.

Goal	Action	Time frame
Ex1. Deepen prayer life	Set daily prayer time	Jul 15, 2025
Ex2. Participate in mid-week prayers	Join the Sunday and Tuesday morning prayers at church	July 1, 2025

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ON “MENTORING YOUTH FOR SPIRITUALITY”

#### **Pastor interview**

1. What challenges do you think young people encounter when they dedicate themselves to their spiritual growth and church activities?
2. What specific initiatives or measures has the church undertaken to counter the decline in spiritual growth of youth and participation in church spiritual activities?
3. Could you describe the results and efficiency of these programs in terms of involving and engaging young people in the church?
4. Regarding youth involvement and engagement in the church, are there any specific strategies or methods that you, as a pastor, recommend?
5. What ideas do you have about how mentorship and assistance programs for young people in the Kigombe SDA Church might be improved?
6. Do you have any particular suggestions for how the Kigombe SDA Church leadership could make the environment more conducive to the spiritual growth of young people?

#### **Church Elders interviews**

1. How would you characterize the current state of youth involvement in church-related activities?
2. In your opinion, what are the main reasons behind the decline of youth spirituality and involvement in church activities?

3. What impact do you think the decline in youth spirituality has on the overall church community?
4. Have you observed any generational differences or changes in the attitudes and priorities of youth toward church involvement over the years?
5. What recommendations or ideas do you have to attract and retain the interest of youth in church spiritual activities?

#### **Women leaders interview**

1. Based on your experience, what are the specific factors that lead to a decline in youth spirituality?
2. What challenges do you think young women encounter when they try to dedicate themselves to church-related activities?
3. Do any policies or programs exist that effectively encourage young women to participate in church activities? If that's the case, how did they work?
4. Can you share some effective strategies for inspiring and empowering young women to take an active role in church spiritual activities?

#### **Youth members interview**

1. How would you describe your level of engagement in church-related activities? Are satisfied?
2. If not, what do you believe to be the primary causes of today's decline of youth in spirituality and the low level of participation in church activities?
3. What would encourage you and your friends to get involved in church spiritual activities and programs?
4. Do you believe that the church leadership adequately addresses the needs and interests of the youth? If not, what upgrades would you recommend?

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