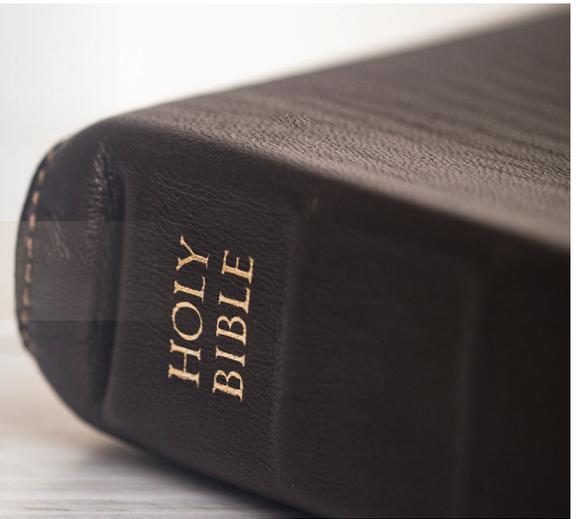


# 101 DISCIPLESHIP



**The Great Commission:** “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’” Matt. 28:18-20 NIV

In the great commission, there is only one command and three helping verbs. “Make disciples” is our Lord’s only command here and His last words. Too often we do everything else, except disciple the nations.

What does Jesus mean by discipling the nations? Jesus said, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is **perfectly trained will be like his teacher.**” Luke 6:40 NKJV. A disciple is one who is being intentionally trained to become more and more like Jesus. In other words, we must train our members and converts to be and do what Jesus did.

Therefore, discipleship training should include these **four parts.**

- (1) Train people to become **one with God**, to have a relationship with Him. Jesus prayed, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may **be one in Us**, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” John 17:20-21NKJV
- (2) Train people **to serve others.** Notice Jesus’ mission statement in Matt. 20:28. “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” NIV. Ellen White wrote, “The spirit of Christ’s self-sacrificing love is the spirit that pervades heaven and is the very essence of its bliss. This is the spirit that Christ’s followers will possess, the work that they will do.” (SC:77.2)
- (3) Train people to **support** each other. Remember the “law of Christ, to love others as Christ loved us (John13:34-35). “No matter how high the profession, he whose heart is not filled with love for God and his fellow men is not a true disciple of Christ.” (AA:318). The easiest way to do this is with healthy small groups, or ministry teams.
- (4) Train people to **disciple others.** Paul wrote, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men (and women) who will also be qualified to teach others. 2 Tim. 2:2 NIV

The following pages will give you the tools to do these four things.

# #1 Discipling People into a Relationship with God

Building a relationship with God, begins by hearing, and knowing, the “Good New” – the gospel. Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the **power** of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). “Do you not know that the goodness of God leads us to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4) Focusing upon what God has done for us, creates a desire to know and love Him.

When sharing the good news, first determine if the person has a **secular** background, or a Christian background. If they have a secular background, explain the good news without using Bible texts (at first). You must have a **friendship** with that person, as evidenced by his/her sharing a personal **tragedy**. After expressing sympathy, and praying for the Holy Spirit guidance, you could explain the good news this way.

1. We were **never meant** to experience (whatever tragedy/problem they shared) ...
2. **Humanity rebelled** against God thousands of years ago, so we have these problems.
3. But **God loves us** too much to leave us with these tragedies.
4. So, He sent His **Son to solve the problems** of sin.
5. Now, He wants to **adopt us** into His family, so we’ll have all that we need to face life’s problems.
6. Are you **willing to be adopted** into God’s family?
7. If they say, “yes,” share (all, or part of) John 1:10-12. “He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. 11 He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. 12 Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right (authority & power) to become children of God.” NIV (The Greek includes all three meanings; right, authority, & power).
8. Next set up an appointment to introduce them to their new family – where you teach them the fundamentals of the devotional life.

*See the following pages for help in teaching the basics of having devotions.*

If they have a **Christian background**, you could begin by asking, “Do you know how to be right with God?” – or some similar question. If they give a “works” answer, ask if you could share what the Bible says about this. If they say, “Yes”, begin in Romans 6:23. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” NIV

From this passage explain our problem, God’s solution, and ask if they want to accept His gift. (To help remember this outline, problem, solution, acceptance, use the letters “PSA” to guide your explanation).

We have a problem, we’ve sinned and deserve to die. If you have time, you could explain that our sins separate us from God (Isa. 59:2). Since God is the author of life, being separated always results in death. To give time for the Holy Spirit to convict their heart, share a story that illustrates this. For example, when I brought my sick wife food to her bed, I tripped over the cord to our lamp and jerked it out of the wall. What do you think happened to the light? Even if I only did this once, or was even sorry that I did it, the light still went out. Even if we sinned only once, or was sorry that we did, we deserve death. Thankfully that isn’t the end of the passage.

“But, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Emphasize that eternal life is always a gift, not a bargain. Perhaps, share a story to illustrate the different between gifts and bargains. Since God wants to give us eternal life, it is important to know how to receive His gift. If you have time, share Eph. 2:8-9, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.” NIV.

God gives eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. What does “though faith” mean? Faith involves both belief and trust. We can believe from scripture that God wants to give us eternal life, but are we trusting Him – acting as if this is true for us? How do “act as if it is true”, by praying the “sinner’s prayer.” First, I explain the four parts of the sinner’s prayer, then I ask if they would like to pray this prayer. The **four parts** are; (1) I realize I’m a **sinner** and deserve to die, (2) I **accept** Your gift of eternal life, (3) I want You to be my **Lord and Savior**, and (4) **Thank you** for giving me eternal life.” (Sometimes they repeat after me each phrase).

As soon as they say, "Amen", ask "Do you now have eternal life?" If they are not sure, read 1 John 5:11-13.

Explain this is the first step in their walk with God. Set up an appointment to teach them the fundamentals of the devotional life. (See the next page).

Later, when teaching them to disciple others, they will need to practice both gospel presentations (for secular and Christians) about ten times (before a mirror, or with friends), with the last time before you – the one making them a disciple.

### Fundamentals of the Devotional Life

**John 14:23**, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep my Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

To help people fall in love with God, we need to help them develop the habit of daily spending time with God in His Word. During this meeting, explain *and model* spending devotional time in the Word. Begin with prayer. Explain we cannot understand spiritual things unless God guides us. Instruct them to always pray before reading God's Word.

Since depth, not distance (in our relationship with God), is our goal, we will select only one Gospel story, starting in either Mark or John. (I use Mark for men since its focus is the actions of Jesus. I use John for women since its focus is a relationship with God). Explain that we are influenced by what we are exposed to (we become what we behold). If we want to be like Jesus, to love God as Jesus did, we need to spend time in the four Gospels.

I often use the following quote from Ellen White (MB:1). I say that a profound religious writer described what we are going to do so well, that I will share what she wrote with them. Here is that quote. "Let us in our imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons." Review the primary concepts of this quote with them.

Next select one Gospel story and model having a devotional. In other words, pray and slowly read that passage. Encourage them to use their imagination to relive that story, perhaps by asking them what their five senses would have experienced. After working through each verse, go back over the verses asking these two questions; (1) "What does this verse tell me about God – His character, etc. and (2) How does this verse apply to me, my life?"

Make another appointment to check on their progress of becoming consistent in their devotional life.

At your next meeting, ask about their devotional life. Most people will say "Fine." If they give a similar response, ask which passages they focused upon since your last appointment. Often, you'll find that people claimed they were too busy to have their devotionals. Encourage whatever they've done. But, remember people always find time for what matters the most to them. Therefore, encourage them to try again this week and that you'll come back to check on their progress. Just knowing you'll return and ask about their devotions will often help people to develop this discipline.

If they keep struggling to become consistent, you might need to adapt their devotionals according to their personality. God loves diversity, as seen in how unique that we are.

So why do some people think that we must do our devotionals all the same way?

God created us to be different. Some people are **introverts**, others are **extroverts**. In other words, some are energized when they are alone, and others are energized being around others. (Many are somewhere between, called ambiverts). Since we want to have a relationship with God, noticing how we relate to others will help us learn how we can best relate to God.

Introverts are happiest doing their devotions by themselves. Extroverts need others to help them do their devotionals. For extroverts, you could get them a "buddy" to hold them accountable (a role you are playing at first).

No one needed to tell Jesus about human nature according to John 2:25. We too need to be observant when it comes to human behavior to know how best to lead people closer to God.

When it comes to guiding different people to develop a consistent devotional life, I try to figure out what **motivates** them. Some people are “achievement oriented.” They like getting things done, crossing items off their to-do list. Other people are “relationally oriented.” They like having fun with their friends and are energized by them. The word “fun” is often used in their conversations. Others are more “rationally oriented” and are very logical, calm, thoughtful, and reasonable. Once they see the logic or rationale for a task, they do it methodically. The last group could be called “perfection oriented.” They seek beauty, harmony and perfection and are energized when they can remove as much external and negative stimulus as possible from their life.

**Achievement oriented people** often start by seeing the devotional life as a task to be achieved, rather than an experience to be savored. Therefore, give them a devotional assignment and hold them accountable regarding daily devotions. Later, guide them into a deeper relationship with God based upon His love.

**Relationally oriented people** experience the greatest difficulty in becoming consistent in their devotional life (discipline is hard for them in most areas of their life as well). To become consistent, they need to have a group to spend time in the Word. Sharing insights with fellow extroverts will be fun for them and will meet their spiritual needs.

**Rationally oriented people** have the easiest time becoming consistent in their devotions. They like quiet reflection and when they understand the reason (logic) for the devotional life, they will do such.

**Perfection oriented people** usually fall into two further groups. Some become like “Pharisees,” reducing religion to “do’s and don’ts.” You might be tempted to admire their zeal, but make sure it’s rooted in a passionate love for God. The other group could be called “mystics.” These people are often intellectuals and are deeply moved by “mystical” or “deep” authors, (even authors whose theology they may even disagree with). Help them to meditate on scripture (often the Psalms) to meet their mystical needs. Also, Christian music is very important in the devotional life of this type of person – as well as some other types.

Please return as often as necessary to help them to become consistent in their devotional life, where they have come to know, love, and serve Him!

After a while, if they are not members, ask them if you could cover the **major themes** of the Bible so they would get more out of their devotions. (You just offered to give them Bible studies). If you are new at this, use one of our denomination’s Bible study guides from our ABC or AdventSource.org. Make sure they are grace oriented!

The following pages are helpful thoughts when guiding people to develop a devotional life.

### **Practical Tips for Experiencing God**

**John 15:1-4** “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that doesn’t produce fruit, and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit, so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned for greater fruitfulness by the message I have given you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. For a branch, cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from Me.”

Vines have a growing season, a fruit bearing season, and a pruning (dormancy) season. (Eccl. 3:1, “To everything there is a season.”) The spiritual life often goes through similar cycles. Through these cycles, our responsibility is to abide/ remain in Christ. God’s responsibility is to produce growth, fruit, and pruning. (God works with in you to will and to do His good pleasure. Phil 2:13).

When trying to experience God, keep in mind the following five concepts, **First**, we are saved only by grace, not by works, lest anyone should boast. Everything we do (or fail to do) to experience God cannot make Him love us more or less! **Second**, remember moderation in all things. Excessive Bible study and/or prayer leads to an unbalanced life and spiritual failure. (Eccl 7:16, “So, don’t be too good or too wise! Why destroy yourself?”) **Third**, just as David could

not use Saul's armor, someone's way of experiencing God may not help us. Try different methods, in different ways to experience His presence. **Fourth**, judge not, lest you be judge accordingly. Each person answers only to God regarding their spiritual growth (or lack thereof). **Fifth**, remember, "those who endure to the end will be saved." (Matt. 24:13). Even our failure to be consistent can be used by God to motivate us to spend more time with Him.

In the Bible, and throughout time, God's people have experienced Him using many different methods; some people call these spiritual disciplines (only use spiritual disciplines that are in harmony with the Bible however). The following are a very brief summary of some of these spiritual disciplines (holy habits). People who get their energy from others (extroverts) often need someone (a buddy) to help them become more consistent in using these disciplines. Introverts (people who are drained being around others) often practice these disciplines best by themselves. Think of these disciplines as a menu, not a recipe; i.e. something to choose from, not a formula for perfection. (Variety is the spice of life and the secret to spiritual growth).

- 1. Meditation:** Meditation on a Bible passage provides opportunities for God's Spirit to guide us into all truth. With each verse, we ask, "What does this tell me about God?" and "How does this apply to my life?" Memorize scripture to aid in your meditation.
- 2. Bible Reading:** The primary focus of this discipline is not to gain knowledge, but to hear God speaking to us as we read prayerfully through His Word.
- 3. Prayer:** Prayer is not primarily about talking or asking. As one listens to God in prayer, his/her mind is open to see things from God's perspectives, to understand His priority, purposes and power.
- 4. Journaling:** Lest one forgets God's blessings, record His insights given when meditating, record His answers to your prayers, or even write out an ongoing dialogue with Him. Many books of the Bible, especially the Psalms, are really journals.
- 5. Fasting:** The Bible mentions three types of fasts. Namely, (1) abstinence from food and water (Esther), (2) abstinence from food (Jesus), and (3) abstinence from luxurious food (Daniel). Some also practice abstinence (fasting) from anything which hinders their intimacy with God.
- 6. Simplicity:** One cannot "serve God and Mammon" (money). In other words, choose to live below your means. A simple life frees us to have more time and resources for God.
- 7. Silence (Solitude):** Be still and know that I am God (Ps. 46:10). God's Sabbath provides detachment from the world's busyness to hear His still small voice.
- 8. Servanthood:** Can Jesus be our Savior and not be our Lord? Does God have the right to ask us to strengthen His saints and/or to advance His kingdom? Do we believe in the Priesthood of all Believers? (If so, where is our ministry?).
- 9. Accountability:** "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" Phil 2:4. "If one falls down, his friends can help him up" Eccl 4:10. Helping others grow spiritually, encourages our spiritual growth. Small groups function well with this discipline.
- 10. Worship:** "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:23-24.
- 11. Nature:** "From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities his eternal power and divine nature" Rom. 1:20. Walking in Nature help many experience God.
- 12. Music:** God inhabits the praise of His people. (Ps 22:3, KJV) Use religious music to experience Him better.
- 13. Religious Art:** Our visually dominate generation might experience God best through religious visual arts.

**Spiritual development is a continuing exposure to God, where one is transformed into His image for the benefit of others.** Spiritual growth doesn't happen in an instant or by using the right words or methods. Spirituality is a process, a journey with ups and downs. Since spiritual development involves being transformed into His image, we must ask ourselves if we are closer to God now than before, or are we more consistent in our exposure to God? Spiritual growth results in benefitting others. We are not just God's trophies of perfection.

## #2 Discipling People to Serve Others

To train a person to serve, it helps to do the following. (1) Help that person discover their calling to ministry – help them discover what ministry they could be passionate about. (2) Help them discover their spiritual gifts for that ministry. (3) Clarify their “style” of ministry and the time they have available for it. And, (4) Coach them into their ministry.

### Discover One's Calling

To help them discover their calling – their passion for ministry ask them to prayerfully answer the following five questions. (For most people, give them a week to brainstorm possible answers and then summarize their replies of what God impressed upon their heart for each of these questions).

1. When it comes to spiritual matters, what do you love talking about the most? What issues (ministries, needs, etc.) do you feel most passionate about? How can you take what you are passionate about and turn it into a ministry?
2. What are the most memorable “ministry” experiences of your life and why?
3. If there were no limitations or hindrances, I would love to do the following for God and others. (If you had only one year to live, what would you like to do for others and God?)
4. Based upon the above answers, I have a passion for ...
5. I think the area I could make my greatest ministry contribution is ...

**Suggestion:** Simply place these five questions on a piece of paper, with room for their answers, and have them fill it out and return to you.

### Discover One's Spiritual Gifts

To help a person begin to discover their spiritual gifts, have them answer the following three questions. (Remember most spiritual gift inventories only tell what you've done, not what God is calling you to do in ministry). Give them time to write out their answers.

1. What do you enjoy doing for God or others?
2. What needs to be done in your church?
3. What needs to be done in your community?

Next, ask them if it is more important to (1) have fun, or (2) accomplish something? If they chose “having fun,” fill out

"People Ministries" below. If you chose "accomplishing something," fill out "Project Ministries."

1. **PEOPLE MINISTRIES:** (circle **all** that God has placed on your heart)

- A. Would you rather work with Adventist **or** Pre-Adventists?
- B. Would you rather work with adults **or** children?
- C. Would you rather lead out in a ministry **or** support an existing ministry?
- D. Do you prefer working by yourself **or** with a team?
- E. List your talents, skills, and amount of discretionary time.

2. **PROJECT MINISTRIES:** (circle **all** that God has placed on your heart)

- A. Do you want to work on a project that helps those within our church **or** help those outside of our church?
- B. Would you like a project that helps children **or** adults?
- C. Do you prefer a project that is more inside (perhaps office oriented) **or** outside and perhaps more labor intensive?
- D. Would you prefer being in charge **or** supporting another who is in charge?
- E. Do you prefer working by yourself **or** with a team?
- F. List your talents, skills and amount of discretionary time.

After answering the first three questions and filling out either people vs. project ministries, you are ready to guide them to try different ministries that fit their answers. Doing ministry confirms one's spiritual gifts. On the next page is an **illustration** of getting people into the best ministry for them.

## Getting the Right Ministry for Each Person:

Just knowing one's spiritual gift(s) isn't enough. Notice the following as an example of how **one gift** could be used many ways.

Different Persons:	Same Spiritual Gift:	Ministry Passion:	Ministry Style:
Alice	<b>Teaching</b>	"To nurture adults members" Could work in Adult Sabbath School.	If task-oriented, provide teachers' materials & training. If people-oriented, lead out in class
Bruce	<b>Teaching</b>	"To work with the unsaved" Could give Bible studies, outreach seminars, etc.	If task-oriented, organizes outreach. If people-oriented, does the outreach.
Carol	<b>Teaching</b>	"To work with member's children" Perhaps works in Children's Sabbath School Divisions	If task-oriented, Lower Division Coordinator. If people-oriented works directly with the children.
Don	<b>Teaching</b>	"To work with the community's children" Could work in some community project for children.	Works with VBS, Neighborhood Bible Club, etc. If task-oriented, organizes these ministries; if people-oriented work with the children directly.

The same gift (teaching) can be used in many different ministries. Thus, you need to know your passion and style to discover the exact ministry to which God has called you!

### Discovering One's Style of Ministry

1. Ask, "Is your life more **structured** or **unstructured**? Do you like (and need) clear plans, goals, and order. Or, do you prefer spontaneity and flexibility. Choose a ministry which reflects your personal style.

2. Remember, your personal style explains your behavior, but doesn't excuse it.
3. What other talents and experiences can you bring to your ministry? How much time can you donate weekly to this ministry? (Record their answers)
4. When it comes to spiritual gifts remember the following quote. "If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever." 1 Cor. 13:1-3
5. Beware of gift projection (all should have my gift), of gift exaltation (my gift is the most important, see 1 Cor. 12:14-31)
6. The Church Body ultimately confirms your calling and spiritual gifts! In other words, church members must recognize that God is blessing you in your ministry and they will usually tell you this. However, you can examine how God blesses your ministry as well – as another indicator.

### **Coaching Each Person into Their Ministry**

Here are the following steps to coach a person into their ministry.

1. **Clarification:** help them decide what ministry area they would like to serve. (See previous pages). Be as specific as possible.
2. **Observation:** give them opportunities to observe others doing that ministry.
3. **Participation:** give them a small assignment within that ministry.
4. **Debrief** them by asking, "What they enjoyed, what they didn't enjoy, and do they want to continue being involved in this ministry?"
5. **More participation:** If they want to continue, give them more responsibilities and see how they progress.
6. **Training:** as needed, provide them training and resources for that ministry. They could read about their ministry or see others, even in different congregations, doing that ministry. Others doing that ministry may suggest educational resources for them.
7. **Accountability:** monthly (if this is a new ministry for them), ask these three questions. (1) What is going well? (2) What is not going well? (3) What do you need to better enjoy your ministry?

8. **Summarize:** write out a brief summary of their responses each month and give it to them via email or text.
9. **Annual Review:** at the end of a year, review with them your monthly summaries and ask them if they want to continue in that ministry. If they do, help them develop their goals for that ministry. Help them determine if they'll need any resources or training to continue in that ministry. Enter into an ongoing coaching relationship with them. Eventually, their goals must contribute/harmonize with the overall goals of their local church.

The following is a brief summary of Biblical spiritual gifts.

### **SPIRITUAL GIFTS SUMMARY**

(P. Wagner: "Your spiritual Gifts" pp. 259-263, *adapted by Del Dunavant*)

**ADMINISTRATION:** The gift of administration is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to understand clearly the immediate and long-range goals of a particular unit of the Body of Christ and to devise and execute effective plans for the accomplishment of those goals.

**APOSTLE:** The gift of apostle is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to assume and exercise general leadership over a number of churches with an extraordinary authority in spiritual matters that is spontaneously recognized and appreciated by those churches.

**CELIBACY:** The gift of celibacy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to remain single and enjoy it; to be unmarried and not suffer undue sexual temptations.

**DISCERNING SPIRITS:** The gift of discerning spirits is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behavior purported to be of God is in reality divine, human, or satanic.

**EVANGELIST:** The gift of evangelist is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to share the gospel with unbelievers in such a way that men and women become Jesus' disciples and responsible members of the Body of Christ.

**EXHORTATION:** The gift of exhortation is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to minister words of comfort, consolation, encouragement and counsel to other members of the Body in such a way that they feel helped and healed.

**EXORCISM:** The gift of exorcism is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to cast out demons and evil spirits.

**FAITH:** The gift of faith is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to discern with extraordinary confidence the will and purposes of God for the future of His work.

**GIVING:** The gift of giving is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to contribute their material resources to the work of the Lord with liberality and cheerfulness.

**HEALING:** The gift of healing is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to serve as human intermediaries through whom it pleases God to cure illness and restore health sometimes apart from the use of natural means.

**HELPS:** The gift of helps is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to invest the talents they have in the life and ministry of other members of the Body, thus enabling the person helped to increase the effectiveness of his or her spiritual gifts.

**HOSPITALITY:** The gift of hospitality is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to provide an open house and a warm welcome for those in need of food and lodging.

**INTERCESSION:** The gift of intercession is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to pray for extended periods of time on a regular basis and see frequent and specific answers to their prayers to a degree much greater than that which is expected of the average Christian.

**INTERPRETATION:** The gift of interpretation is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to make known in the vernacular the message of one who speaks in tongues (another language).

**KNOWLEDGE:** The gift of knowledge is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to discover, accumulate, analyze and clarify information and ideas that are pertinent to the growth and well-being of the Body.

**LEADERSHIP:** The gift of leadership is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to set goals in accordance with God's purpose for the future and to communicate these goals to others in such a way that they will voluntarily and harmoniously work together to accomplish these goals for the glory of God.

**MARTYRDOM:** The gift of martyrdom is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to undergo suffering for the faith even to death while consistently displaying a joyous and victorious attitude that brings glory to God.

**MERCY:** The gift of mercy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to feel genuine empathy and compassion for individuals, both Christian and non-Christian, who suffer distressing physical, mental, or emotional problems, and to translate that compassion into cheerfully done deeds that reflect Christ's love and alleviate the suffering.

**MIRACLES:** The gift of miracles is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to serve as human intermediaries through whom it pleases God to perform powerful acts that are perceived by observers to have altered the course of nature (to be supernatural).

**MISSIONARY:** The gift of missionary is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to minister whatever other gifts they have in a second culture.

**PASTOR:** The gift of pastor is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to assume a long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers and to equip them for ministry.

**PROPHECY:** The gift of prophecy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to His people through a divinely-appointed utterance.

**SERVICE:** The gift of service is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to (1) identify the unmet needs of people or those needs involved in a task related to God's work, and (2) to make use of available resources to meet those needs, and (3) to help accomplish desired goals.

**TEACHING:** The gift of teaching is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to communicate information relevant to the health and ministry of the Body and its members in such a way that others will learn.

**TONGUES:** The gift of tongues is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to (a) receive and communicate an immediate message from God to His people through a divinely appointed utterance in a language they have never learned and/or to (b) speak to God in a language they have never learned.

**VOLUNTARY POVERTY:** The gift of voluntary poverty is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to renounce material comfort and luxury and adopt a personal life-style equivalent to those living at the poverty level in a given society in order to serve God more effectively.

**WISDOM:** The gift of wisdom is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to know the mind of the Holy Spirit in such a way as to receive insight into how knowledge may best be applied to specific needs arising in the Body of Christ.

## #3 Discipling People to Support Each Other

The easiest way to teach people to support each other is to get them into a healthy small group or ministry team – that practices the four principles of healthy small groups. If you want to start healthy small groups, see the information below.

To understand the importance of this, note what Ellen White wrote, “The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by **One who cannot err**. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the **church members**, but for **unbelievers**. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others. Let them reveal Christlike forbearance and patience, speaking no hasty words, using the talent of speech to build one another up in the most holy faith. Let them labor in Christlike love for those outside the fold, forgetting self in their endeavor to help others. As they work and pray in Christ’s name, their numbers will increase; for the Savior says: “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 18:19 (7T: 21-22, emphasis mine).

### Why Have Small Groups?

Why should we have small groups? I believe small groups are **NOT** optional for healthy Christians preparing for Christ to come!

1. God is a small group (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). In the first reference to God, He is called Elohim (plural of El). Yet, Deut. 6:4 also emphasizes the oneness of God – again using Elohim.
2. Satan was the first to move from oneness to “one-ism” – the focus upon self. Isa 14:13-14, “For you have said in your heart: **I will** ascend into heaven, **I will** exalt my throne above the stars of God; **I will** also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; **I will** ascend above the heights of the clouds, **I will** be like the “Most High.” (Rev. 12:7, this resulted in war in heaven).
3. Note these verses. **John 13:34-35**, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; *as I have loved you*, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” **Gal 6:2**, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” **Phil 2:1-4**, “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourself. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” **Heb. 10:24-25**, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”
4. From the beginning, God brought people together. He made Adam and Eve “one.” Throughout the Old Testament, the Bible keeps talking about God “gathering” His people. In the New Testament, Jesus had two small groups; first His disciples, and second His inner circle of Peter, James and John. The New Testament Church met in small groups. Acts 2:46-47, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

5. Today, people must “belong before they believe.” People don’t care about our doctrines until they see the quality of our lives. When people see that we are “caring people,” only then are they interested in what we believe. Small groups are the perfect way (method) to reach our modern world.
6. Healthy small groups have four parts. If any one of these parts is missing, your group cannot be healthy! These parts are; (1) supportive fellowship, (2) intercessory prayer, (3) relational Bible study, and (4) outreach.

### #1 Supportive Fellowship

1. The basic premise of supportive fellowship is to provide **encouragement and accountability** for each other in our walk with God. Your small group must be a safe place for people to share their burdens as well as their hopes and joys.
2. Always be prudent about what you share. Sharing is **not** a time to air “Dirty laundry@ it is not a time for gossip, nor is it group therapy. Especially at first, share primarily in areas that you want to grow. Ask the group to pray for your victory in that area and expect them to ask you about it the next week.
3. Each person needs a brief time to share. No one should dominate the sharing time - nor have “All the answers@ - to expressed concerns. The group facilitator may need to state how many minutes each person has to share or at least moderate the sharing-time so every person has ample time. Some small groups don=t allow “**cross talk.**@ In other words, no one is allowed to interrupt the one sharing nor make comments (e.g. offer advise) afterwards.
4. **Confidentiality** is also an extremely important issue with small groups. A breach of confidence could be cause for expulsion from the group. (See below regarding a group covenant).
5. If you have members who do not understand appropriate boundaries (talking too much, being difficult with others, etc.), pray much and then talk with them privately. First, find out why they are not being respectful of others. Second, remind them of the purpose of this group (where everyone experiences genuine care and support). Third, ask them to speak/act in harmony with these principles. Fourth, if they continue to be disruptive, after a few reminders, tell them that if they cannot work within the guidelines of the group, they will be asked not to come back. You must protect your small group (like a shepherd with a flock) or you will destroy your small group.

Notice this quotes from Ellen White. “We sustain a loss when we neglect the privilege of associating together to strengthen and encourage one another in the service of God. The truths of His word lose their vividness and importance in our minds. Our hearts cease to be enlightened and aroused by their sanctifying influence, and we decline in spirituality. In our association as Christians we lose much by lack of sympathy with one another. He who shuts himself up to himself is not filling the position that God designed he should. The proper cultivation of the social elements in our nature brings us into sympathy with others and is a means of development and strength to us in the service of God.” SC 101.2

### #2 Intercessory Prayer

1. One of the most tangible ways to show genuine concern for others is to pray for them – to intercede for them before God.
2. Over 90% of Americans pray. (32% of atheists pray weekly – as positive self-talk and ventilation). People will greatly appreciate your offer to pray about their concerns mentioned during the supportive fellowship time!

3. The Bible is full of examples of intercessory prayer. For example, Job (the first book written in the Bible) was told to intercede in behalf of his "friends" (Job 42:8). Moses often interceded in behalf of the nation of Israel (Ex. 32:11ff). Presently, Jesus is interceding for each one of us as our High Priest. When we pray for others, we are simply joining Jesus, in His ministry, as part of the priesthood of all Believers (1 Pet. 2:9).
4. In all small groups you will need a leader and an assistant leader. The assistant leader facilitates this portion of your group. She/he needs to use a prayer journal, listing at least (1) the date of each request, (2) a summary of the request, and (3) God's answer to that request. When people see how God answers prayer, their faith will be strengthened. When the group gets too large (more than 7-12), this assistant leader will become the leader of the second group. Now both groups will need to find another assistant leader (to make the next split smoother).
5. If people have really enjoyed their fellowship, they will not want to split. You will need to do the following to make this go smoothly. First, point out for a few weeks, that everyone hasn't had time to share, the very purpose of our group. (Another reason not to run over the appointed time). Second, announce the group will be dividing and ask who will follow the assistant leader for the second group. (This realignment must be done publicly). Third, announce that you will have monthly social events where you can keep in touch with the original group. After a few months, make these quarterly (not monthly) and by the end of 12 months, have it only once or twice a year.
6. During the fellowship time, if someone sharing a particularly difficult concern, stop and pray for that person/ need immediately. You might surround them, and you might lay hands on them. I've use Mark 16:18, or James 5:13-18 to explain what we are doing.
7. If you have Pentecostals joining your group, praise God and pray much about this! Also, announce that if anyone wants to pray in the Spirit, they must follow 1Cor. 14 and have an interpreter. When I require this, all of my Pentecostal friends pray normally.
8. God has chosen to limit His miraculous interventions subject to our prayers. In light of the great controversy, Satan accuses God of overwhelming His children with His goodness. (See the story of Job). Therefore, God waits until we ask, so He is free to bless us.
9. Note some these Ellen White quotes.

"The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of the privileges that God has given them in the divine appointment of prayer. Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence? Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path. The adversary seeks continually to obstruct the way to the mercy seat, that we may not by earnest supplication and faith obtain grace and power to resist temptation." (SC 94.2)

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children." "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing, that in any way concerns our peace, is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another

soul upon the earth to share His watch care, not another soul for whom He gave His Beloved Son. (SC 100.1)

### #3 Relational (inductive) Bible Study

1. Small groups without Bible study too easily becomes just a social gathering, a clique, or a gossip session. However, the Bible study time must not be the predominant portion of the small group either.
2. Relational (inductive) Bible study provides everyone with the opportunity to relive a Bible scene and to imagine what might have happened. "But we all, with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18). "By beholding we become changed." (AH:330 – EGW used this phrase 238 times) (In other words, we become what we behold). (Many of these concepts are similar to those shared when helping a person to develop the discipline of a devotional life.)
3. As one explains to the group what they are about to do, read the following quote from a famous 19<sup>th</sup> century religious writer (Ellen White). "Let us in our imagination go back to that scene (Sermon on the Mount), and as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their heart. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons." (TMB:1)
4. Since Paul said that spiritual things are spiritually discerned (I Cor. 2:13-15), we always pray just before opening the Word.
5. We select only one Bible story. Our goal is depth, not distance – giving time for them to behold the character of God and to be transformed into His image.
6. The story will be from one of the four Gospels – since Jesus is the greatest (the best) reflection of the character of God. Each week, we just go to the next story. This gives them time to read ahead and to study the passage if they prefer.
7. I invite them to first read (to themselves), and then reread that story. Ask themselves what would they have seen, heard, etc. as they try to re-live that scene. I invite them to place themselves in the story as either the major figure or as an observer.
8. Then we discuss what each of us imagined about this story going verse by verse. Everyone has an opportunity to share what they imagined. There are NO wrong perceptions. (If a person is "way off base," **affirm** what you can and then guide them back to what the Bible says. Remember, when reflecting on the Word, the Holy Spirit guides and teaches. The more you encourage sharing their insights on this passage, the more they will "get in" to this type of Bible study.
9. After each has shared their imaginations of reliving each verse, Go back to the beginning and ask two questions. First, what do these verses tell you about the character of God. Second, how do any of these verses apply to your life.
10. I encourage them to record (journal) their insights. Reading their journal latter with strengthen their faith even more.
11. My small groups are not doctrinal, nor denominationally focused. I want EVERYONE to feel comfortable in my

group. However, when our doctrines are part of the Bible story for that day, I will make sure I get our group to focus upon them – without explaining why (using only the context of that passage). Also, some of the visitors will have problems finding the Gospels or have very little knowledge of the Bible. After that session, I will mention to them privately, I noticed you didn't know where "Mark" is (or whatever they were unsure about). **Could I explain the major themes of the Bible so you will feel more comfortable in our group?** (In SDA language, I just asked if they wanted Bible studies). Everyone, who I offered this to, gladly accepted my private study with them (and yes, they became SDAs). So, I don't need to study our doctrines in our small group, we accomplish this in another way.

#### #4 Outreach

1. When people experience a healthy small group, they often enjoy it too much. Who would not enjoy a stimulating Bible study? Who would not enjoy a gathering where people genuinely cared about each other and prayed for each other? Unfortunately, if this was all that was done in a small group, that group would soon become a religious social club or a pious clique. All healthy things grow. Sick things struggle to survive. Healthy small groups grow through outreach.
2. Outreach is an essential part of being a Christian. Every Christian is responsible for advancing God's kingdom. "Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary." DA 195 Doing outreach within a small group helps each person to fulfil their calling.
3. Outreach can be done many different ways. First, let me explain the simplest way. Simply invite others to join your group. You might keep a special (empty) chair in your circle. Before you close, ask, "Who could we ask to fill this chair at our next gathering?" – and pray about this. Since most small groups are held in homes, you could ask your neighbors, fellow workers, family, and friends.
4. I do two things to make it easier to ask people to try our group. First, I talk with my neighbors (etc.) and I give them something. Before I leave, I say, "If you are ever overwhelmed, and want someone to pray for you, would you please ask me?" (I might add that I love praying for people and seeing God's many answers to prayer). When they ask for prayer later, I will pray for them and invite them to our group which prays for people's needs. The second thing I do, is whenever I am about, I try to smile at everyone. If they smile back, I talk (about anything). If they talk back (and we have time) I drop a God hint (bring God into the conversation – for example, "Hasn't God given us a beautiful day?") If they respond to this hint, they are good candidates to come to my small group.
5. If you have a healthy small group, covering the four basic parts, group members will feel comfortable inviting their friends (etc.) to your group as well. Pray much about this. Keep reminding your group on the importance of bringing people to your group and have them pray about this as well.
6. Some groups don't want to grow and divide. They can do outreach in another way. For example, they can start another small group where they are the leader. (Then part of your small group will be coaching them about their small groups).
7. Others, will want to make their outreach as service projects – where they improve the quality of life within their community. Find people in need and help them. For example, help senior citizens or other disadvantaged people. When they ask why you are doing this, tell them about your experience of God's love – so you want to share His love with others. (NEVER accept payment for your services – because you want to model the free gift of eternal life to others).
8. For service projects, Steve Sjogren's books give a lot of help. His book, "101 Ways to Reach Your Community," is a very practical book on how to do this. His book, "Conspiracy of Kindness" gives the theology of servant evangelism.

9. Again, offering to teach the major themes of the Bible (giving Bible studies) with those who are Biblically illiterate is another way of doing outreach.

### **How to Start Small Groups**

1. Your (lead) pastor **MUST** preach at least a multiple week series on the importance of genuine fellowship. (Fellowship outside of Sabbath morning at church). Stress that Christian fellowship is not optional for healthy Christians preparing for His soon return. See some ideas in the section of supportive fellowship. (Some churches, after a series on the imperativeness of fellowship, set up tables, with the leader seated who invites the members as they leave church to sign up for their group).
2. Assemble a list of possible attendees. Make an announcement in your bulletin giving people an opportunity to be part of a new small group. If your church has a Facebook page, advertise there. If you can, do a phone campaign inviting people to join a small group.
3. Divide the list by (A) **age** – per decade, (B) **gender** (same gender tends to be more honest and open with each other), (C) **family** (sometimes members of the same family are the cause of his/her problems and need to be in a different group).
4. Set a time and place for your small group meeting. Be prepared ten minutes before people arrive. Look around and ask yourself what will make people comfortable in your home.
5. If your attendees have small children, arrange babysitting in one of these ways. First, one adult per week, will take the kids into another room and play quiet games. Or, your group could each pay a dollar (or more) each week to hire a safe teenager to watch these kids. Or, encourage each parent to find their own babysitter.
6. At the first session, and as often as needed, explain the purpose of this group – a place where people genuinely care about each other – Christian fellowship. I usually let people attend a few times, before showing them the covenant of our group (see later pages on covenants). Then I ask them to pray about this covenant and sign it if they want to be part of this group.
7. We establish how long this group will meet – both time, duration, and how frequently. (Tip: if you meet weekly, keep it to one hour. If you meet twice a month, keep it to 90 minutes. If you meet monthly, do not go over 3 hours).
8. Here is my weekly schedule; 10-15 minutes on fellowship, 5-10 minutes on prayer, 20-25 minutes on Bible study, and 5-10 minutes talking about outreach.
9. Begin an ongoing training program for the small group leaders. The easiest way to do this is simply have all the leaders, and assistant leaders meet in a small group which the pastor shepherds. This way, the greater challenges can be forwarded to the pastor and the leaders “get fed.” (See Ex. 18, the Jethro Principle). (You cannot keep feeding, if you are not being fed!).
10. In the small group leader’s training, you might use one of the following books for discussion.
  - A. **Small Groups, Big Impact** by Jim Engli and Dwight Marble. This book is based on the research of thousands of small groups – giving what works and why. (I have a two-page summary of this book, if you want it).
  - B. **Successful Small Groups** by Kurt Johnson. Elder Johnson is one of the foremost authority within Adventism on small groups. This book is a summary of all that he has learned leading out in small groups over forty years.

- C. **How to Build a Small Groups Ministry** by Neal McBride. This is one of the classic evangelical books on small groups.
- D. **Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership** by Carl George. This is my favorite book to train small group leaders.
- E. **The Power of Small Groups in the Church** by Miguel Angel Cerna. This is another book by an Adventist on small groups.
- F. **Real Small Groups Don't Just Happen** by Neal McBride. Another great classic by Dr. McBride on small groups.

### Covenants - Example One:

We desire each person to have a safe and supportive environment to share, learn, and grow. In order to provide an opportunity for rewarding fellowship and active participation for each attendee, I the undersigned agree to the following;

1. I will enter into our group discussion as I feel comfortable, allowing time for each attendee to speak.
2. I will be truthful in what I say. If I don't feel comfortable sharing, when it comes to my turn, I will say "pass." (Or I don't wish to speak at this time).
3. I will not judge others, criticize, or give advice.
4. I will attend every meeting promptly except when there is a great personal tragedy.
5. When I am unable to attend, I will notify our small group leader before the meeting.
6. I understand that if I have two unexcused absences (where I did not notify our leader), I will no longer be part of this group.
7. Except when legally required to do otherwise, I will keep in strictest confidence everything that is said within this group. Gossiping will result in expulsion from this group.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**Example two:** Write a covenant based on the following statements from pages 2 & 3.

The basic premise of supportive fellowship is to provide **encouragement and accountability** for each other in our walk with God. Your small group must be a safe place for people to share their burdens as well as their hopes.

Always be prudent about what you share. Sharing is **not** a time to air "dirty laundry"; it is not a time for gossip, nor is it group therapy. Especially at first, share primarily in areas that you want to grow. Ask the group to pray for your victory in that area and expect them to ask you about it the next week.

Each person needs a brief time to share. No one should dominate the sharing time, nor have all the answers, when concerns are expressed. The group facilitator may need to state how many minutes each person has to share or a least moderate the sharing time so every person has ample time. Some small groups don't allow "**cross talk.**" In other words, no one should interrupt the one sharing nor make comments (e.g. offer advise) afterwards.

**Confidentiality** is also an extremely important issue with small groups. A breach of confidence could be cause for expulsion from the group. Then have them sign this covenant when they are ready to be part of your group.

## #4 Discipling People to Disciple Others

Today, the country of Israel has two large bodies of water, one fresh, one (nearly) dead. The difference in these two water sources is, (1) the water flows through one, and (2) the other retains all the water. Unless we want to be dead spiritually, we need to share (flow through) the blessings God gave to us with others. (See Zach. 4:1-7, sharing the olive oil)

Discipleship is not about making ourselves spiritual trophies for God. What we receive must be pass on to others. Paul said, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men (and women) who will also be qualified to teach others. 2 Tim. 2:2 NIV (parenthetical addition mine).

At first, secure permission to disciple a church member or a friend. Perhaps you could ask to "practice" on them. Begin by giving them the good news, using either the secular or Christian approach as appropriate. Next, help them in their devotional life. If they are not already a member, ask if you can teach the **major themes** of the Bible so they can get more from their devotions. (See notes on "Discipling People to Love God").

Second, once they are (more) consistent in their devotional life, help them discover their calling, spiritual gifts, and coach them into their ministry. See the material shared in that section.

Third, help them be part of a healthy small group, or ministry team (that practice those four essentials), where they support each other – in their pilgrimage to His kingdom.

Last, coach them to disciple another person. In other words, be actively involved with them as they disciple another. After they've disciplined several persons, then they are ready to coach others to disciple people. Then, you can start this process over again. ("Rinse & Repeat!") Eventually, every member will be disciplined. Many of our friends will be faithful **disciples** of Christ. Then, when the gospel has been preached to all the world, as a witness to all nations, then the end will come. Then, we can look up and say, "This is my God and we have waited for Him!"

May God continue to bless you abundantly as you disciple others for Him!