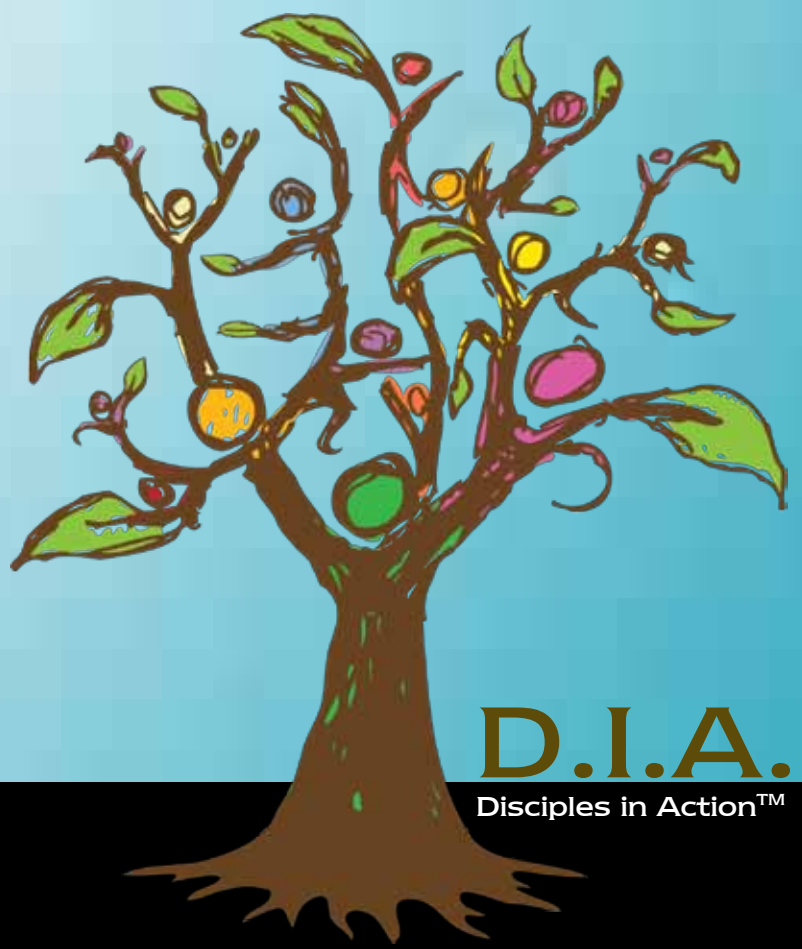


SERIES FOUR
discipleship



D.I.A.
Disciples in Action™

GROW REFLECT REVEAL

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST



participant's guide

fourth in a five series course to help you on your discipleship journey

D.I.A.

Disciples in Action™

series 4

a five series course to help you on your discipleship journey

Produced by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® Youth Ministries Department

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D.I.A.

Disciples in Action™

how to use this book

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with some general instructions to meet your individual needs.

The main body is written like a conversation you would have with a friend. It is designed to assist you in your discipleship journey. While it is recommended that you follow the process as set out in the book, please feel free to reorganize the material to respond to and maximize your own circumstances and opportunities.

The *Together Growing Fruitful Disciples* (TGFD) framework, on which this curriculum is based, is the scope of learning. While it does not necessarily describe all the tools considered valuable for you in your spiritual journey, it identifies a core of learning that is essential for everyone. There are many different ways to approach this curriculum, but regardless of the approach, it will represent the beginning point of a discipleship journey! However, the completion of this book should not be viewed as the culmination of the discipleship process, but rather as an essential step in your ongoing discipleship journey. It should answer the questions, “What will life look like after this series?” “What is the expected outcome?”

The suggested length of each session is 90 minutes.

Growing Disciples Inventory (GDI): This suggested pre and post session activity can be found at www.growingfruitfuldisciples.org/gdi. This eighty-four-question inventory is aligned with the TGFD framework to aid in determining areas of growth that have taken place in a disciple’s life and areas in which one needs to grow. The online version includes a graphic representation of the inventory results as well as a Spiritual Growth Action Plan. For those of you who may not have access to the Internet or would like to allow others to experience the inventory without having to go through the entire online version, the “short form” version, available on page 63, is an excellent alternative.



connector

This is the Bible text: the power base of each study. Whether it is one verse or several chapters long, this will provide the link between the mind and the heart. (“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” 2 Timothy 3:16, NIV.)



themes

The themes for each session are derived from the indicators that are listed for each commitment.



big idea

This is one statement that sums up the essence of the session. It serves as the intersection between the themes and the topic.



journey (60 minutes)

- **Exploration** (30-40 minutes) is the biblical and philosophical exploration of the main ideas on which the session is built. Each session will include interactive learning to help lead the group in the most effective way possible. **Note:** The leader should make sure to make the interactive sessions exciting and natural. Feel free to adjust each exercise to the size of the group. Familiarize yourself with the “interaction” segments before the session and make sure to infuse excitement into each illustration.
- **Reflection** (10-15 minutes) should focus on helping the participant reflect and respond to the truths they have just discovered. Questions are included in this section.
- **Application** (10-15 minutes) shows how the lessons can be applied to everyday life.



dig deep

Dig Deep is optional and may not be found in all lessons. It provides informative sidelights that add insight to a particular passage, word, fact, or Core Belief. These can also provide insights on youth culture, current events, and philosophy throughout each study.



from the pen of Ellen G. White

Where appropriate, relevant quotes from the writings of E. G. White are included throughout each session.



disciples in action

This is where the writer pulls a challenge from the lesson for the participant to act on using what they have learned during this session.



mentors

Before beginning, identify someone you can trust and respect to be your mentor. Information on the mentoring program can be found on page 54, and the application on page 64.



leader's note

This is handy information that will help coach the leader throughout the meeting.



debriefing

This session intends to summarize and invite responses to the previous sessions and tie them all together. By this time you should have already been putting into practice some, if not all, of what was studied and suggested in the previous sessions. Now you can discuss what works and what does not work for you and examine if you are embracing the life changing habits or disciplines that have been presented and discussed.

Plan the Work. Work the Plan!

**Starting over
or just taking
a bold step?**

D.I.A.

Disciples in Action™

the youth and young adults discipleship curriculum
that will help you on your journey toward an
authentic walk with Jesus.

introduction

“Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples’” (Luke 11:1, NKJV).

It’s often believed that being a disciple of Jesus is an “automatic” event. Once you’ve accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, all you have to do is read the Bible and pray and all will be well. Of course, those are imperative to the Christian journey. But *how* do we read the Bible? *How* do we pray? *How* do we best open our hearts and minds so that the Holy Spirit can do His work in us? That’s what *Disciples in Action* (DIA) is all about!

DIA is built on the Together Growing Fruitful Disciples (TGFD) framework. This framework is the foundation of a discipleship model designed to help us think more clearly and deeply about the spiritual growth and maturity of ourselves and others as disciples of Jesus Christ. It identifies four growth processes around which we believe the disciple’s journey occurs:

- **Connecting:** Growing in relationship with God, others, and self
- **Understanding:** Growing in knowledge of Jesus and His teachings
- **Ministering:** Growing in participation of God’s mission of revelation, reconciliation, and restoration
- **Equipping:** Growing in the body of Christ by walking alongside other disciples in order to support, nurture, and strengthen in love

All four processes in this model are centered on and accomplished through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Separating these processes may seem artificial, but it does allow us to bring clarity to vital aspects of discipleship that might otherwise be overlooked.

In this model, *commitments* for the growing Christian are articulated for each of the individual processes. Within each process, *commitments* are further divided into key aspects of spiritual growth called *indicators*. These *indicators* represent behaviors through which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ. They also represent a lifetime of following Jesus.

Spiritual Mentors (or Partners, Companions) are crucial in our discipleship journey, as revealed in the *equipping* aspect of this model. Actually, the support, nurture, and strengthening derived from our walking alongside each other in this journey is foundational. Thus, you'll find in this DIA curriculum that each participant is to be assigned a mentor right from the start.

Whether the person is much older or just a little older, the mentor should be someone who the participant can trust and look to as a role model for learning how to live the Christian life. Some qualities of a mentor should include:

- a willingness to share his/her walk with God.
- sincerity and honesty in sharing their faith stories.
- openness in communication.
- a willingness to provide support and encouragement by listening and giving honest feedback without trying to force change. (Spiritual accountability is not about giving up control. It is about allowing another person to help us accomplish spiritual goals that we have set for ourselves.)

Another element of growing is that of assessment. It answers the question, "How am I doing?" Of course, each person's journey is unique; the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be replicated in a lab as we do vitamins and pharmaceuticals! "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8, NKJV). However, it is possible to assess the direction of one's life. Thus, the DIA curriculum directs leaders to utilize the Growing Disciples Inventory (GDI), located at www.growingfruitfuldisciples.org/gdi. This eighty-four-question inventory is aligned with the TGFD framework to aid in determining areas of growth that have taken place in a disciple's life and areas in which one needs to grow. The online version includes a graphic representation of the inventory results as well as a Spiritual Growth Action Plan.

The inventory is also available on page 63 as a "short form" that contains only twenty questions. For those of you who may not have access to the Internet or would like to allow others to experience the inventory without having them go through the entire online version, the short form is an excellent alternative.

Scripture encourages us to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12b, 13, NKJV). While it is God's work in us through His Holy Spirit, the DIA curriculum is an excellent tool to help young people experience God's work in their lives and to assist them in trusting Him to that work.

SESSION SIXTEEN

by *Tracy Morgan*

Christ-Centered Relationships

developing Christ-centered relationships in the local and global church as a member of the body of Christ



Tracy A. Morgan lives in Holly, Michigan with her husband and their two sons. She is the author of *Bathsheba: A Story of Sin and Redemption* and *Samson*, as well as several articles that have been published in *Women of Spirit*, *Signs of the Times*, and *Primary Treasure*.



theme

To develop Christ-centered relationships in the local and global church as a member of the body of Christ, I am:

- being supported and nurtured by the community of believers.
- praying with and for fellow believers, rejoicing with those who rejoice, and caring for those who are in need.
- loving and serving the church's children and continuing to disciple them as they mature into adults.
- treating others redemptively when they are disciplined or shunned by church or society.
- keeping informed and responding to news and stories of the world church.



big idea

As members of the body of Christ, we must be willing to accept others where they are and help lead them to a redemptive relationship with God.



connector

Look: Romans 12:9-21, Acts 9:1-31

Memorize: “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited” (Romans 12:15-16, NIV).



THE JOURNEY exploration

News was spreading all over Damascus. Saul of Tarsus was coming with the authority of the chief priests to arrest Christ's followers and take them back to Jerusalem. Everyone knew what would happen if Saul found them. His reputation for cruelty had spread as far as the fleeing members of the infant church. Ananias, one of the disciples living in Damascus, waited in dread for the knock at his door. It was just a matter of time before he was found. What about all the other believers? How long would it take the eager and efficient Saul to flush them all out? Ananias could not rest, so instead he prayed and asked God to protect his church family. As he prayed, a heavenly messenger came to him and told him to go to a nearby boarding house to minister to one of the occupants there. The angel told him the location and then told him the name of the man he was to help – Saul of Tarsus. That couldn't be right! This messenger had to know that Saul was part of the Jewish mob that stoned the beloved deacon Stephen, and ever since then he had been hunting and killing followers of Jesus with a zeal that was nothing short of evil. How could he step foot in the same room as this man? It could be a trap. Saul was sure to kill him—or worse, torture him until he led him to other believers. Ananias argued with the angel, but he was told again to go to Saul.

With the words still ringing in his ears, Ananias mustered up the courage to walk to Straight Street to the house of Judas to find Saul of Tarsus. When he arrived in Saul's room, he saw

a broken, despondent, blind man lying on the floor. It was obvious he hadn't had anything to eat or drink in days. Where were his friends from Jerusalem? How could they have left him in this condition? Ananias stepped forward and placed his hand on Saul's head. He explained that God had sent him there so he would receive sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Immediately, something that looked like fish scales fell off of Saul's eyes and he could see again.

The first face Saul saw was that of a follower of Jesus—a man he was sent to capture and kill, but instead he found himself helpless and repentant. Since seeing Jesus on the road to Damascus and hearing His voice, he had been tormented with regret over the wrongs he had committed against the followers of the true Messiah. Now, weak and exhausted, he was completely at the mercy of this stranger. But Ananias did not harm Saul. Instead he ministered to him like the angel had instructed. Before Saul even took a bite of food or a drink of water, he was baptized. He was then fed and taken to meet the other disciples. At first there was obvious suspicion and fear, but once the Christians found out that Saul was a convert, they embraced him and protected him against the Jewish leaders who quickly turned on their former champion. The believers in Damascus even helped him escape the city so he could return to Jerusalem.

- Do you think it would be hard to embrace someone who once tried to harm you or your loved ones?

reflection

Saul traveled all over the region proclaiming Jesus wherever he went. In spite of the wrongs he had done to the early church, he was accepted and nurtured by his fellow believers. Saul changed his name to Paul, and he went on to become one of the greatest missionaries of all time. Just as the angel predicted, Paul carried God's name to the Gentiles and their rulers as well as the people of Israel (Acts 9:15). He led countless followers to Jesus and is credited with writing half of the books in the New Testament. Imagine what would have happened if the early church had shunned Saul.

- What if Adolf Hitler or Osama Bin Laden accepted Christ before they died? How do you think they would have been received by your church? How would you personally treat them?
- Do you think some people just aren't worthy of forgiveness? Talk about reasons why or why not.

application

When Jesus was on earth, He ate with sinners and tax collectors. The Pharisees, who were always looking for a way to trap Him, asked His disciples why He would keep such company. Jesus overheard the conversation and told them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

As Jesus' instruments today, we have to be willing to be kind to others and treat them redemptively. If someone has been shunned by church or society, we are still to treat them as children of God. We need our community of believers to nurture and support us when we stumble, so it is only fair that we give that same care to others who are in need. When we see someone who is hurting, we are to care for them and help lead them back to the Savior.

No one was beneath Jesus' care. Whether it was a crooked tax collector or a small child, Jesus was careful to attend to the needs of everyone. When His disciples tried to send the children away, Jesus rebuked them. He embraced the children and put His hands on them, showing His love and concern for each of them. Our churches and communities are full of children and young people who need to be discipled and mentored as well. As Christians, we can show our love to these children, guiding them in a maturing relationship with Jesus.

- What are some of the needs of members of your community?
- How can your church as a whole help meet those needs?
- What are some ways you can minister to children and show them they are important too?
- What can you do personally to reach out to those who have been shunned by society or church?



dig deep

As members of a world-wide church of more than sixteen million members, how can we all be part of one body? The answer is actually quite simple. If we all have the same mission and we are united under one Savior, working toward the goal of heaven for ourselves and everyone else we come in contact with, we are one body. Whatever our gifts and talents might be, we are to work together as one on both a local and global scale. When we pray for fellow believers and share in their joys and sorrows, it draws us closer to them as a family. Those believers may live in our own home or on the other side of the world, but they are all part of the same whole.

In our technological society, it is easier than ever to stay current on worldwide news. With just a few mouse clicks or finger slides, we can find out what is happening around the world in mission fields and churches. Our Sabbath school quarterlies and mission magazines also keep us informed on what is happening. If we stay current on what is happening worldwide, we can respond by sending help and prayers when needed. We will also have the added benefit of rejoicing in the victories won in even the most remote corners of the world.

- Do you have contact with believers in other parts of the world?
- How can you stay knowledgeable about what is happening outside of your own local church?



disciples in action

- Find the contact information for a missionary who is currently working in the field. Get in touch with them to find out what their needs are. Pray for them and work toward getting them the help they may need.
- Get a list of non-attending members at your church. Contact as many of them as you can and invite them back to church. Pray with them and continue to pray for them.
- Reach out to the young people at your church. Make a point of saying hello and finding out their names and interests. Try to build relationships with the children whenever possible.



prayer time

- Start a prayer journal and write down the people you know who are struggling or in need. Systematically pray for each person on the list every day. Be sure to write down the answers to prayers as well.
- Pray for those who have sinned and turned away from God—even if they have hurt you personally.

SESSION SEVENTEEN

by *Debbonnaire Kovacs*

God Has Provided Everything

developing Christ-centered relationships in the local and global church as a member of the body of Christ



Debbonnaire Kovacs has been writing since she could hold a pencil and sold her first story to Junior Guide when she was eleven years old. By her twenties, she recognized that writing and speaking were not just what she loved to do, but what God wanted her to do. She has written off and on for most of her life, but has been writing full time since 1990, having written fourteen books including the first, second, fifth, and sixth grade Bible textbooks used in Adventist schools in North America, and more than 150 stories and articles for all ages. She speaks at camp meetings, women's retreats, and other events, and also does copyediting. She urges everyone to take their dreams to God and see whether they are more than just dreams. They may be assignments from the King of Heaven.

You can reach her at debbonnaire@debbonnaire.com or on the Web at www.debbonnaire.com

PREAMBLE

This information will offer added insight into this lesson.

Grace or Works?

Christians have been trying to tease apart the specifics of what might be called “the grace/works conundrum” since not too long after Jesus went back to His Father. But in fact, the debate began *long* before that. We could go back to any of the prophets, alternately preaching works: “keep the Sabbath, pay your tithe, make honest sacrifices, *be kind!*” and proclaiming grace: “God loves even the unregenerate sinner and would do anything to restore them.”

Or we could move earlier to Moses, who spent pages and pages and pages on instructions for every detail of life (works) and yet kept insisting that God’s love (grace) was the basis of everything and that our response to it should be to “love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:5).

We can see it beginning already in the story of Cain and Abel—making the wrong sacrifice in the wrong spirit is rebuked (works) but God comes in person to speak to the erring one and urge him back into the way of truth (grace). Or earlier still, when Adam and Eve sinned and promptly hid (the immediate result of sinful actions), but God hunted them down and offered redemption (always His immediate response to sinful actions).

Is this as far back into history as we could go? No, there’s still the terrible story of Lucifer, that great mystery. How could a perfectly beautiful, perfectly loving being, so surrounded by love and grace that he and his friends didn’t even know there was a law (ref), possibly decide to turn away from that? Here’s the really incomprehensible part—Satan claimed *God* was unfair and harsh and demanding, and that he could run

the universe better, with more freedom. His *modus operandi* ever since has been to come up with “works systems” that are increasingly unfair, harsh, and demanding! You have to crawl on your knees on some sort of pilgrimage to get God to love you. You have to sit on a flagpole for weeks, or beat yourself, or lie on nails, and maybe you might be able to get God to love you. You have to burn up your child in a fire on the arms of a leering idol!

Alternatively, you could choose the “fun” route. There is no God anyway, so do whatever you want. Drink, take drugs, eat anything, read, watch, and say anything. End up in chains of addiction you can’t break, and call that “freedom!”

Grace Alone

Have we now moved back as far as we can? No, never. There is still God. God was, is, and will be. God was there in the silence, there to see the first wave/particles of light, there to hear the first whispers of waves on a rocky planet. And God was *always* all about grace. God is love, all true love comes from God, and love is grace. Love and grace are forgiving above all. God had a heart for forgiving before anyone ever sinned and needed it.

God is the source of life and knows what kinds of actions, or works, will keep us physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially healthy. And if you add up all those adverbs, you get “spiritually.” The Bible doesn’t teach that we *have* a spirit or soul, but that we *are* one, and all those divisions we like to make, mostly for quite practical and useful reasons, add up to one healthy spirit. This healthy spirit, or person, does the acts or works of righteousness because that is what living the life of grace and love is all about. This healthy soul knows what it means to mess up, fall down, be picked up by God, cleaned up, forgiven, and taught better.

And this healthy soul knows how to pass that spirit of love, grace, and forgiveness on.

Praise the Lord!



theme

Understanding that God has provided everything that is needed for my redemption, I am learning that:

- salvation and eternal life are gifts to me through the grace of God.
- Christ came to earth to reveal the character of God and to die in my place as atonement for my sin.
- the love of God draws me to feel sorrow for my sin, to confess, and to repent.
- God forgives sin and restores brokenness.



big idea

God loves me so much that He made me, gave His Son to save me, and walks with me daily to restore me. I don't have to do anything to earn that.



connector

Look: Ephesians 2:8-10; John 3:16

Memorize: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:8-10, *Today’s New International Version*).



THE JOURNEY

exploration

God gives salvation freely

What is salvation? There are a lot of possible answers:

- Salvation is eternal life.
- Salvation is deliverance from sin and its consequences.
- Salvation is living a right life with God.
- Salvation is a gift that comes through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

These are all true. However, the definition of the word itself may surprise you. It is derived from the Latin *salvus*, which means “well, unharmed, or sound” (myEtymology.com). It’s a word that’s about health and wholeness, like the Hebrew *shalom*.

In other words, God is interested in our wholeness. He created a whole world with whole human beings on it. Everything they needed for a life that was “well, unharmed, and sound” was there—food, shelter (if any was needed), fellowship, work, play, and rest. The serpent said, “No, this isn’t all you need. You won’t be *really* whole until you know as much about evil as you do about good.” (He’s still saying that, by the way. You hear variations on it all the time.)

So we broke it. The wholeness of Adam and Eve’s relationship with God and with each other was the first thing broken, and the soundness of the world was close behind. Thorns, weeds, blood, sweat, tears. . . world wars, pollution, a fading ozone layer. We’re groaning together, the world and its inhabitants (read Romans 8:22).

And we can't fix it. We keep thinking we can. We keep trying. But the fact is, we're in a hole too deep for us to get out of. If we want to work with God to save His children and His hurting world, we must first accept the hand He is holding down to us. He is willing, able, and more than eager to pull us out of the muck and give us a job helping to pull others out and put everything back together again.

Adam and Eve were in a mess. And so are we. But God has a plan.

1. How would you have defined salvation before this session? Would you define it differently now?

2. What are some ways you feel broken?

3. What are some ways you see brokenness in others around you? In the world?

4. How has God healed your brokenness?

God steps into the muck

I wonder what Adam and Eve *thought* God meant when He told the serpent, “He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen 3:15, TNV). I wonder how much He explained about the Deliverer, who He would be, how He would come. I wonder if they had even an inkling that it would be *God Himself*, coming as a human baby. I wonder if even Satan knew that. . .

Once upon a time, really truly, here in this historical world, a baby was born in a stable to a real, human mother, probably a teenager, worn out from traveling for days only to find no room to stay in. There was a real (probably scared) father present (who knew, by the way, that this baby wasn’t his, and knew Whose it was, too! How weird is that?). There were likely some women to help. There was blood, sweat, and tears, just as the Fall had wrought, even “pain in childbirth.” Jesus had to come into the results of the curse, step into a world very different from the one He’d planned and crafted by hand.

We won’t even try to understand the “how” of this amazing miracle. Humans probably won’t understand that even after living in heaven for thousands of years. But why? That’s the real question. Why did He do that?

Father, Son, and Spirit loved you that much. Loved me that much.

We couldn’t climb out of the hole, and we hadn’t done very well at hearing the advice God called out to us through the prophets He sent over the centuries. The best they could do was attempt to somewhat prepare a people for a shocking invasion of reality by the God they’d been either terrified of or disrespectful to, by turns. Or both.

So Jesus came Himself. He came to say two things:

1. This is what God looks like. God loves you, right in your mess, and is willing to touch you even if you’re leprous, heal you no matter how you got sick, speak to you even if you’re an outcast, restore you even if you’re a really *bad* sinner.
2. You can’t do this, but I can. I can come down into the hole and still have enough strength to climb out, making a way for you on my back, as it were. Hang on!

Here is an important point about which there's more controversy than there needs to be. Jesus did not come to say, "Here's how it's done, just watch Me and you can climb out by yourself." He did come to say, "This is the way I want you to live after I pull you out." There's a difference.

His life, His death, His resurrection are sufficient for everyone on the planet. Say yes, and hang on! There's more to come.

1. Have you ever tried spending some time really meditating on the birth of Jesus? Find a quiet place and some time, pray for insight, and let your imagination really grab hold of what it would be like to be that teenage mother, that nervous father. What would you think as you held your firstborn in your hands and marveled at His tininess and strangeness, like every other new parent in the world, but then tried to get your head around *this is GOD!!* Quite unlike any other parent ever? Write about your thoughts.

1. What are some of the specific ways you've helped to dig your own hole? Pray for help in plain language that helps you to understand, though God already does.

2. How do you explain the difference between Jesus as our complete and sole salvation and Jesus as our example? In what ways are both true?

restoration

Jesus came, lived a sinless life, died a courageous and unimaginable death, and rose again. I know it; I believe it; now what? Surely knowing all of this and accepting its reality into my life ought to make me a better person, right? Well, yes, but as Ellen White points out in *Steps to Christ*, “The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature” (p. 64).

This means that restoration will be inextricably bound up with forgiveness. Jesus saves us. He does this by His own act without any help from us, though it doesn’t do us much good until we turn our faces toward His and accept it. But after that, He wants to teach us how to live.

People have generally gone in two mistaken directions on this subject. Either everything depends on doing *all the right things in exactly the right way* (and if you don’t know where you’re going wrong I’ll be glad to tell you!), or *God loves us and once we say yes to Him anything we want to do will be fine. It’s up to Him to make us perfect.* Or. . . maybe just to declare that *what we’re already doing counts as perfect.* Yeah, that’s better. Not...

As usual, the road has two edges, and you can crash off either side. The truth in the center of life with Christ is that He saves me, I accept that, He then declares me righteous through His own perfection and sets out to take the rest of my life to teach me how to live a righteous life. That is, a life of perfect love and endless grace. If I am living in connection with Christ moment by moment, my first reaction to sin will be grace, too, just like His. I’ll long to find ways to bring wholeness and health to the broken sinners I see around me. So I’ll reach out to try to help. . . and I’ll blow it. I’ll make somebody feel patronized or judged when that was the opposite of what I meant.

Or I’ll be too tired, or too busy, or too (fill in the blank) and not try to help at all, which is worse.

Or, let’s face it, I’ll just be selfish!

I need forgiveness. Again. There’s plenty of forgiveness available. The question is, will I realize I need it? Will I remember to look back into the face of Jesus, which I forgot for a minute or

a day? Will I see those eyes of love and feel the breaking of the hard shell around my heart? Having got that far, will I accept forgiveness freely given, or still try to somehow earn it?

And then, will I pass it on? If I truly understand my own condition and truly accept the unbelievable grace of God in erasing that and working hard to restore me, I'll want everyone to know what that feels like. I won't be like the ungrateful servant who ran out and put his petty debtor in prison after being forgiven for a debt that would take three lifetimes to repay.

1. Why is restoration so bound up with forgiveness?

2. What do you need to be forgiven for?

3. What and whom do you need to forgive? What will you do about it?

reflection

God has everything you need, right in His hand. That hand is stretched out toward you. Have you taken it? Do you take it again, every hour of every day? Do you point it out to others and urge them to take it, too?

If you have a journal, here are some things to reflect on, or you could discuss them with your friends or with your group.

- I know in my head that God has provided everything I need for salvation and redemption, but sometimes I try to avoid some parts of the package, or try to find ways to save myself. What are some of these ways, and what am I willing to do about it?
- What does it really mean to me that Jesus came to save me—and would have done it even if I'd been the only sinner?
- Are there ways I make forgiveness too hard or too easy? Do I sometimes excuse or condone instead of forgiving? Do I sometimes think I can't forgive because that would mean I don't take the sin seriously?

application

Having reflected on these things, challenge yourself to find ways to make them real and visible in your daily life.

- How do I order and plan my day to intentionally and visibly live a life of wholeness and redemption?
- Whom should I talk to and let know that I forgive them? Whom should I forgive in my heart and not even tell them because they never knew I was hard-hearted toward them and it would hurt them worse to know?
- Is there something I need to ask forgiveness for? Are there ways to make restitution? Is there something I already know I'm forgiven for, but I have a hard time accepting it and living in that light? Or is there someone I can't forgive? Who might be willing to talk with me and help me?

SESSION EIGHTEEN

by *Debbonnaire Kovacs*

Supporting Ministries

supporting the ministries of the local and global church with personal resources



Debbonnaire Kovacs has been writing since she could hold a pencil and sold her first story to Junior Guide when she was eleven years old. By her twenties, she recognized that writing and speaking were not just what she loved to do, but what God wanted her to do. She has written off and on for most of her life, but has been writing full time since 1990, having written fourteen books including the first, second, fifth, and sixth grade Bible textbooks used in Adventist schools in North America and more than 150 stories and articles for all ages. She speaks at camp meetings, women's retreats, and other events, and also does copyediting. She urges everyone to take their dreams to God and see whether they are more than just dreams. They may be assignments from the King of Heaven.

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theme

To support the ministries of the local and global church with personal resources, I am:

- managing my resources with the understanding that they all belong to God.
- returning a faithful tithe and giving offerings systematically.
- serving in one or more ministries of my local church.
- participating personally, as possible, in global service projects or ministries.



big idea

God has blessed me with many gifts and wants me to manage them for Him and His work, for my own and others' blessing.



connector

Look: Malachi 3:6-12; Leviticus 19:9, 10; 23:22; 1 Corinthians 12

Memorize: “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6, *Today's New International Version*).

THE JOURNEY

exploration

it all belongs to God

In Psalm 50:10, God says, “Every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine.” The hairs on our head, the unique prints carved into our fingertips, the ability to think and speak and act, our musical gifts, painting talents, and athletic abilities were all created and given by God.

Money belongs to God, too, even though He’s not the one who invented it. All societies start out bartering, and as long as Jane has something Joe needs and they can trade directly, that’s easy. It’s still possible if Joe has something Jane wants and Jane has something George needs, and George can do something for Joe, but it’s getting complicated. At some point, someone used God-given intelligence to say, “Let’s decide together that this particular kind of shell or stone will represent a certain amount of labor, goods, or service. Then we can all trade freely.”

But where did they get the shells and beads? Where did they get the brains, muscles, and talents to do the things they did for each other? God gave them. Ultimately, it is impossible for us to give anything to God that He didn’t already give to us.

It would behoove us, then, to remember this before we make any decisions concerning how much of which things we’ll “give” to God. It’s all already His. We are His, too, but He lets us decide whether or not we want to live that way. If we decide we do, then we are His in a new, all-inclusive way. Suddenly, we want nothing more than to be of use in His kingdom. We of-

fer up everything we own and wish there were more. And when it comes to financial details, we think, “Ten percent? That’s all He wants back? Wow, if only my bank and credit card companies were so moderate! Not to mention the tax man!”

So we begin the adventure of learning how to manage, or steward, God’s goods. And we soon discover tithing is only the tip of the iceberg. If it all belongs to God, then what kinds of videos will He want in His library? What kind of TV to watch them on? How much should I spend on clothing and personal needs, and what statement do I make by my dress and behavior? Which job would He like me to take, and how many hours a week should I work? Someone who belongs entirely to God and is living like it will be certain that family time is inviolate, and not just on Sabbath, either.

then, what about “the poor and needy”?

People who belong entirely to God will learn to really see those around them. They will discover there are always those who need more than they do, whether in physical goods or love or self-respect, and they’ll look for creative and loving ways for those persons to meet their needs and still maintain dignity.

Leviticus talks about the ancient practice of gleaning. It’s stated just as directly as any other command of God; in fact, it’s right before repeats of “do not lie” and “do not steal:” “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:9, 10, TNIV). That’s pretty clear. Imagine if our country ran that way. All the farms would have corners and edges where, if a person was willing to work and pick the food, they could have it.

There are some ways in which we do something like this. Thrift stores sell used things and overstock stores sell things that haven’t sold, and these things are available, not for direct work, but for a smaller amount of money, so that the working poor can afford them. However, these things are often very poor quality, and it doesn’t apply to food. If you actually don’t have enough to eat, you must go through an undignified, even humiliating “begging” process known as “applying for assistance.”

Perhaps some creative Christian will come up with a better method, allowing people who can't find paying work to still keep their self-respect and work for what they need, and helping people with disabilities to understand that they, too, contribute to the human family, even if it's only through their smiles or their very existence.

It all belongs to Him—including every human being.

1. Make a list of the temporal ways in which God has blessed you. Be as complete as you can.

2. Now list the ways you are using all of these blessings for God's kingdom. Be creative—it doesn't necessarily mean in recognized "religious" ways.

3. What are some ways that you can promote a "gleaning" mentality? Do you have a "field" you could share from?

4. Beyond tithe, how can you be systematic and intentional about financial support for God's work in the world?

non-financial giving

When we think of “stewardship,” or supporting God’s work in the world, we tend to think of money first. And it is important, certainly. However, it’s probably the least important of the gifts you have been given or can give back. If God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, He certainly owns you and me, especially if we have made the daily choice to live His way.

You may be familiar with the lists of spiritual gifts in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. Perhaps you have taken one of the tests available to help you determine what some of your gifts are. If not, it’s a good idea to try. The next step is to try using some of them.

The first and often easiest place to begin is in local church ministry.

Are your gifts of the up-front variety? You could do special music, make a presentation on health or some local news such as Pathfinders or Ingathering, or even preach a sermon. Would you rather work behind the scenes? There are always tasks such as helping with cleaning, decorating for a certain season, helping with a potluck, or running the sound system. Are you somewhere in between? Perhaps you’d like to be an usher or a greeter. Have you ever considered leading a Sabbath school discussion or starting a small group? And there’s always need for people to help in children’s departments! Sometimes the work a young person does in his or her local congregation leads to a career or vocation. In any case, it will develop your interest and ability to work for God in a variety of ways, and it’s a good place to practice and find out which things you really are good at and which you may want to let someone else do. Where else but in a loving church family?

Most of our work for God, however, unless we do become pastors, Bible workers, and so on, will necessarily lie outside the church doors. There are a multitude of opportunities for volunteering in your local community, no matter how small or large it may be. You can do individual things, like mowing lawns for elderly or disabled people, taking meals to shut-ins, or offering to babysit free of charge for a single parent you know. Or you could call your local social service agencies and see what’s available on a more organized level. There may be after-school

programs, or literacy programs, or Red Cross, Unicef, March of Dimes, and more. Volunteerism is on the rise. Shouldn't God's people be in the forefront? Volunteers find their own lives enriched far beyond what they may give to others.

Most importantly, serving people opens doors to locked hearts. That is, if the service is really done with love. People can tell. Phonies will not fool them, but they will open up to people they learn to trust, and when they do, you will have made a new friend and discovered doors unlocking in your own heart as well. You will find opportunities to share the blessings God has given you as you learn to follow Him and to invite others to try it, too. And you will grow into someone you hardly recognize—someone loving, giving, and full of the joy of life.

1. Make a new list, this time of spiritual and emotional gifts, talents, and abilities you feel God has entrusted to you. Again, be as complete as you can.

2. What are some of the ways you already use these gifts to build the kingdom of God? What new things would you like to try?

3. How do you work for God outside the church? What have been some of the results?

4. How would you encourage someone else to use their gifts for God?

global neighbors

Not everyone can go physically to another land to work for God, but everyone who gets the chance, even for a short-term mission trip, should jump at it. Those who have gone, almost without exception, come back saying their lives have been changed forever. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has lots of opportunities for these missions. And if you feel God is calling you to a greater commitment, to live and work for an extended time in another culture, you should explore that while you're young and before life sweeps you past the opportunity.

In the meantime, there are other ways to support global mission, besides, of course, mission offerings.

- First, you can partner at home with a missionary or mission family abroad. Many now have blogs or websites where you can keep up, offer prayers when they go through tough times, listen when they need to talk, offer counsel if you have it, and encourage them at all times. These people serve on the front lines of the Great Controversy, and their task, while incredibly rewarding, is also difficult, demanding, even dangerous—spiritually and sometimes physically.
- Secondly, we are becoming more and more a global family with the reach of technology that allows you to have Facebook friends from every continent and talk face to face on a computer in time zones that require some creative scheduling on both ends. Could you see your time online as a mission for God? And what would that mean? One thing that we've all learned is that online communication has to be careful. Without facial expressions and body language, emails and posts can easily be misunderstood. Then there's the

security issue. We have to be careful both about personal information and about what spiritual subjects we choose to air. Christians have been known to end up in some flaming debates that were not Christ-like at all, no matter what the original subject may have been. And what if you get all heated and angry about an issue that you come to see differently as you grow and mature in Christ?

We are so used to 24/7 contact and technology that we may treat it like we (shouldn't) treat our little sisters or best friends—rant and sneer and ridicule—and apologize later. The problem is, we can't *really* take back the words we've said that hurt people, and if it's online, it lives forever!

The bottom line is, people who belong entirely to God will strive to be Christ-like at all times and in all situations. And that means every day, every store, every street, every classroom and work station becomes a mission outpost for the kingdom. It all belongs to Him! Let's support it and His work for it in every way we can.

1. Have you ever been on a mission trip? If so, share some stories.

2. Do you partner with a missionary or mission family? Would you like to? How will you go about finding one, and what do you think you can do to help and support their work?

3. Have you thought about your online presence as a mission? How could you work for God in this way?

reflection

Every single thing we have, are, and do is because of God. Even if we are rebelling and refusing to live His way, that's because Jesus died to give us freedom of choice. If we are dedicated to God, we will dedicate all our resources, from physical, monetary, temporal blessings to talents, gifts, spiritual abilities, and our very hearts and souls to Him.

If you have a journal, here are some things to reflect on, or you could discuss them with your friends or with your group.

- Do I have any resistance to giving God back His full ten percent? If so, why? What can I do to change that?
- What is my attitude about giving beyond tithe? What excuses, if any, do I make? What are some blessings I've received when I've given freely and cheerfully?
- Have I seen some ways that people use online forums such as Facebook in an attempt to be missionaries, but it felt forced or preachy to me? Why did I have that reaction? How can I avoid the same mistake?

application

Having reflected on these things, challenge yourself to find ways to make them real and visible in your daily life.

- How can I budget my time, money, and other physical resources to be sure God gets His ten percent back and give more beyond that?
- What are the ways I serve in my local congregation? What are some things I'd like to try? Who will I ask to help me get started?
- How could I go on a mission trip or support someone who has?

SESSION NINETEEN

by *Calvin Roberson*

Living a Contagious Christian Life

helping believers live a contagious, holistic Christian life



Calvin N. Roberson is a graduate of Oakwood College, where he earned his B.A. in theology; he earned his M. Div. at Andrews University and is presently pursuing his doctorate at Ashland University. Calvin began pastoring at the age of 24 and went on to successfully pastor nine churches in the Allegheny West Conference. His congregations have had exceptional growth. In 1986 he got involved in youth ministry when he instituted student mentoring programs in the public schools in Charlottesville, VA. That passion for youth ministry has also been expressed through numerous youth arts and witnessing initiatives.



To help believers live a contagious, holistic Christian life, I am showing others how to:

- understand the biblical teaching to love the Lord with our heart, soul, strength, and mind.
- explain how Christ is the center of all biblical teachings.
- express Christ's love by creatively using their talents and interests.
- apply biblical principles to every aspect of their lives—mind, body, and spirit.
- lead someone to accept and follow Christ.



big idea

Christianity is not to be lived in a bubble or in isolation from secular society, but rather, because of the active and indwelling love of Christ, it should be an infectious experience that affects everyone with whom we come in contact.



connector

Look: 1 John 4:-21; Matthew 22: 37-40

Memorize: “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love” (John 5: 8, 9).



THE JOURNEY exploration

It is difficult to read a book, watch a movie, or speak about relationships without eventually hearing about love. It is a present force in our society and in our lives. God, through His Word, speaks of love profusely in the Old and New Testaments. It is the one common thread that runs through the entire fabric of Scripture. In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul gives this definition of love: “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away” (1 Corinthians 13:2-8 ESV).

These characteristics are the outgrowth of someone who has experienced love. Many may look at this text and conclude that this standard is too high to reach. But if we look closely, most of us can see an area or areas where we have fallen terribly short of this ideal.

So now you may be asking yourself, “Who on this earth can be always patient and kind and never irritable?” “Who would dare say that they believe all things and can endure all things?” It

seems an impossible task. However, this is the beauty of this passage. Of ourselves, it is an impossible task to love this way. This is why the first and greatest love requirement is not to love our neighbor, but rather to love God.

The Pharisees asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment. “And He replied to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (intellect). This is the great (most important, principal) and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself. These two commandments sum up and upon them depend all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22: 37, 38, *Amplified*).

We find from this text that loving God is our first priority. Have you ever wondered, “How do I love God”? Is it enough to just utter the words toward heaven? How do you show love to someone who is as big and self-sufficient as God? What can you say to Him that will make a difference?

application

Think about ways in which you express love to God.

God is love.

The Bible describes God as love in 1 John 4:8. It says, “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” This simple statement is heavy with truth. If you do not love others around you, you do not know God. The verse does not say that God is lovable or that God is loved or that God is loving, but rather God is love. This means that God does not get love from some other wonderful place and then gives it to you. It begins with Him. If He did not exist, love would not exist. It is impossible to separate the two. Therefore, we cannot concoct or generate love on our own. It does not originate with us, but with God.

Because love begins with God, He does not need our love to feel validated or whole. He is not insecure or lacking when we do not love Him. He instructs us that the only way to show that we love Him is to take the love that He gives us through our relationship with Him and share it with those around us.

Journal time

Learning to love as Christ loved.

At the top of a blank page in your journal, write the words, “I love you because...” Then write a very brief personal compliment about someone you find difficult to interact with—preferably someone you interact with regularly. The compliment has to be about the person—not about their watch or dress. (For example, you can write that the person has great taste, but you may not say that they wear nice clothes. Do this for five consecutive days. Each day you should read 1 Corinthians 13. On day five, reflect and see if your feelings and reaction to this person have improved over the week. Is loving this person easier?

Jesus told His disciples, “I have loved you, [just] as the Father has loved Me; abide in My love [continue in His love with Me]. If you keep My commandments (if you continue to obey My instructions), you will abide in My love and live on in it, just as I have obeyed My Father’s commandments and live on in His love. I have told you these things, that My joy and delight may be in you, and that your joy and gladness may be of full measure and complete and overflowing. This is My commandment: that you love one another [just] as I have loved you (John 15: 9-12, Amplified).

So we show our love to God by how we treat people around us each day. The verse says, “if you love me, keep my commandment,” and His commandment is to love one another as He loved us.

How much did He love us?

Romans 5:8 says, “But God shows and clearly proves His [own] love for us by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) died for us” (Amplified).

The entire Bible leads up to this point. The Old Testament sanctuary services point us to the cross of Calvary and to Jesus, our wonderful Sacrifice. All biblical teachings find their end in Jesus our Messiah and the fact that He loves us so much that He was willing to give the ultimate gift, His life. This was done while we were still sinners, or still His enemies.

Needless to say, many would not do anything positive to an enemy, much less give them life.

But this is the godly love we are to show to one another. Regardless of race, gender, looks, smell, or family, when we love because God loves us, there will be no limit. This is how we attract people to Christ. We win them with love and acceptance. Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other” (John 13:35).

A disciple. An ambassador

A disciple is one who follows another. As Christians we are not only called to be disciples, but also to make disciples of others. This is done through how we love each other. God even makes it easy for us to love. He doesn't tell us to be abnormal, but rather through our gifts and talents we are to bring others to Christ. All our gifts and talents were given by a loving God who wants to show His love to others through us. You are His ambassador. Whether you are a singer, an artist, a spoken word artist, an athlete, or a great talker, God gave you that gift to reflect His love.

Paul, in his letter to the church at Ephesus, said our gifts have a specific purpose. “Their purpose is to prepare God's people to serve and to build up the body of Christ. This is to continue until all of us are united in our faith and in our knowledge about God's Son, until we become mature, until we measure up to Christ, who is the standard. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed and carried about by all kinds of teachings that change like the wind. We will no longer be influenced by people who use cunning and clever strategies to lead us astray. Instead, as we lovingly speak the truth, we will grow up completely in our relationship to Christ, who is the head. He makes the whole body fit together and unites it through the support of every joint. As each and every part does its job, he makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:12-16, GOD'S WORD Translation).

All our gifts are to be used through His love and are designed to build His kingdom. When we are using our gifts in this manner, His love will automatically draw people to our side and then we will have an opportunity to share Christ with them.

reflection

God sincerely desires to have a deep and loving relationship with you. He wants to reveal more of His love to you each day, but our hearts have to be sensitive enough to receive Him when He does.

Since love is shown through action, try to do your best to describe what God's love looks like.

1. Can you think of times when you have not been very loving because of how someone looked?
2. How is your own opinion of yourself affected when you consider how God values you? Does knowing how God values you change your opinion of yourself?

application

Sometimes it's much easier to just say "I love you" than to really show it. How do you think you could change the way you show love to your annoying brother or sister—or even your parents?

The first place you learn to show God's love is in your family. Give an example of something you can do to show love to your family.

Do you know what your gifts and talents are? It is important that you know, because these are the methods God will use to win others to Himself. If you do not know your gifts, here are a few easy steps to finding out:

1. First, find out what you really enjoy doing. Next, find out what you are complimented on the most. It may be singing or just how you speak, or even the fact that you are always the positive one.
2. Lastly, read 1 Corinthians 12 and find out where you fit in.



dig deep

What is love?



“Encourage the expression of love toward God and toward each other. The reason why there are so many hardhearted men and women in the world is that true affection has been regarded as weakness and has been discouraged and repressed. The better nature of these persons was stifled in childhood; and unless the light of divine love shall melt away their cold selfishness, their happiness will be forever ruined. If we wish our children to possess the tender spirit of Jesus and the sympathy that angels manifest for us, we must encourage the generous, loving impulses of childhood” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 516).

It is important that as a young person these valuable lessons are loved and utilized to avoid the negative attitudes Mrs. White speaks of. A deeper reading of 1 John 4 will also give invaluable insight on how we should relate to those around us.

A recent newspaper article reported this survey:

If you had to choose between your significant other or your pet, who would win? The Associated Press reports that in a recent survey, 14 percent picked the pet. The story doesn't get into the reasons WHY the respondents picked lover or pet, but I'm really curious about it. If you fall in love with someone who only loves you on the condition that Fido, the dog, goes elsewhere, then that's probably not the right person for you anyway. But if you fall in love with someone who loves you madly, but is terribly allergic to Fluffy, the cat — well, then, Fluffy would likely need to find a new home. But take this quote from the story, from Fidel Martinez: “I've had numerous relationships with women. My dog has never let me down.” (Yuma Sun Newspaper, January 26, 2011 by Roxanne Molenaar-Assignment Editor)

Some people find it easier to love their pet than to love their neighbors. This may be because pets give unconditional love.

With humans, that's not always the case. We always take a risk with loving because it may not be returned. However, the thing that causes us to shy away from love is the very thing that makes love worth it. That thing is our humanity. Often the people with the greatest capacity to hurt us may have the greatest capacity to love us.

Ellen White gives us this counsel:



“The divine love emanating from Christ never destroys human love , but includes human love , refined and purified. By it human love is elevated and ennobled. Human love can never bear its precious fruit until it is united with the divine nature and trained to grow heavenward” (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 202).

disciples in action

- Share with your accountability partner one way in which you will do something practical to show God's love to a close family member. Contact your partner mid-week to share your progress.
- Use this week to discover your talents or gifts. Find out what you love to do and the areas in which you are complimented the most. Share your findings with your accountability partner.

prayer time

- Take time to pray about ways to express God's love to the people around you.
- Ask God to reveal His love to you through others and learn how to praise Him for it.
- Pray for God to bring someone into your path this week with whom you can share Jesus.



debriefing

SESSION TWENTY

by *Debbonnaire Kovacs*

debriefing sessions 16 - 19



Debbonnaire Kovacs has been writing since she could hold a pencil and sold her first story to Junior Guide when she was eleven years old. By her twenties, she recognized that writing and speaking were not just what she loved to do, but what God wanted her to do. She has written off and on for most of her life, but has been writing full time since 1990, having written fourteen books including the first, second, fifth, and sixth grade Bible textbooks used in Adventist schools in North America and more than 150 stories and articles for all ages. She speaks at camp meetings, women's retreats, and other events, and also does copyediting. She urges everyone to take their dreams to God and see whether they are more than just dreams. They may be assignments from the King of Heaven.

You can reach her at debbonnaire@debbonnaire.com or on the Web at www.debbonnaire.com

debriefing sessions 16 - 19



Time: 90 minutes. *Try to spend approximately 15-20 minutes discussing each section below, leaving time for small group prayer and commitment at the end.*

discipleship begins and ends with Jesus—the focal point!

In Sessions 16 through 19, we have explored an interesting progression: We have moved from learning about what it means to have human relationships centered in our relationship to God, to understanding that God has provided all we need for redemption, to stewarding the resources, both tangible and intangible, that He has given us, to passing on the Good News and helping others begin or continue the same journey. At first glance, it may seem that these four subjects don't track together very well, but consider it further. Everything (*everything*, from Session 1 onward) begins and ends in the love of God. If we have any desire at all to love those around us, it has to begin with loving God and centering all things in Christ and His sacrificial spirit. This leads to true redemption, not just of our souls, but of our earthly relationships. These two sides of the Christian life, loving God and loving others, lead us to commit all that we are and all that we have to Him, which is what we define as stewardship. And why do we commit all that? Simple! Because now that we know what it means to live a whole, free life in Christ, we want everyone around us to share in that joy. So we pass it on, with excitement and enthusiasm. That's infectious, so they pass it on, and *they* pass it on. . . forever and ever, amen!

Here is a round-up of the four *Big Ideas* we studied:

1. As members of the body of Christ, we must be willing to accept others where they are and help lead them to a redemptive relationship with God.
2. God loves me so much that He made me, gave His Son to save me, and walks with me daily to restore me. I don't have to do anything to earn that.
3. God has blessed me with many gifts and wants me to manage them for Him and His work, for my own and others' blessing.
4. Christianity is not to be lived in a bubble or in isolation from secular society, but rather, because of the active and indwelling love of Christ, it should be an infectious experience that affects everyone with whom we come in contact.

During session 16 we discovered that Christ-centered relationships in the local and global church include giving and accepting forgiveness; being supported and nurtured by the community of believers; loving and mentoring those who are younger as they mature into adults; and keeping informed and responding to news and stories of the global church.

Session 16: Christ-Centered Relationships

- How did the personalization of the story of Saul's conversion affect you? As you thought and prayed about the questions, did you find your attitudes toward hurtful people changing? Have you forgiven someone who badly hurt you or someone you love?
- Share a time when someone reached out to you in love and forgiveness. How did that affect you?
- Have you thought about the idea of being a mentor to someone younger than you are? What might you be able to share with someone who is, perhaps, just learning to love and follow Jesus?
- We all believe the church should be united, but what does that mean and what does it not mean? In this context, discuss the difference between unison singing and harmony singing. What insights can you gain from this metaphor?

- Share some ways you keep contact with believers in other parts of the world. Have you gone on a mission trip at some point? How much did it mean to you to have contact from home?

Session 17 helped us understand that God has provided everything that is needed for our redemption and that Christ died in our place to redeem us to Himself.

Session 17: Redemption

- What are some ways you've been noticing brokenness since you studied this session together?
- Have you tried to find some ways to help heal the brokenness in yourself, your friends, your enemies? What is happening in that arena?
- The author said this:

Here is an important point about which there's more controversy than there needs to be. Jesus did not come to say, "Here's how it's done, just watch Me and you can climb out by yourself." He did come to say, "This is the way I want you to live after I pull you out." There's a difference.

Discuss this thorny issue. Where do you stand? Why?

- Share some of the mistakes you feel you've made in loving others, both those done through selfishness and those you honestly meant well, but messed up through awkwardness or simple human frailty. What are some of the feelings this raises, both when you first realize you've made a mistake and when you turn and accept God's forgiveness? What helps you to try again rather than hiding away and refusing to try anymore?

In session 18 we learned that everything we have belongs to God, and supporting the church with personal resources does not only mean tangible gifts like our finances, but also the intangibles like our time, talents, and spiritual gifts.

Session 18: Stewardship

- What does stewardship have to do with love and restoration of relationship?
- How have your temporal blessings helped or hindered your walk with God and others?
- How have your intangible gifts such as talents and spiritual gifts been used in ways that help or hinder your own and others' spirituality? Is there anything you want to change, do more or less of? How?
- Share what has happened in your life as a result of being more careful and intentional in your stewardship of the resources, tangible and intangible, that God has entrusted to you.
- Have you been successful in encouraging another to use his or her gifts for God? What have been the results?
- Have you changed your budget, either of money or of time?

During session 19 we learned that Christianity is not to be lived in a bubble or in isolation from secular society, but rather, because of the active and indwelling love of Christ, it should be an infectious experience that affects everyone with whom we come in contact.

Session 19: Passing It On

- What have you learned since studying this session about how your love for God impacts your ability to be loving toward others?
- Here is an interesting exercise: Write down the names of ten people who are mentors to you, one way or another. In the original sense of the word, you are a “disciple” to these people. Now, write down the names of ten people who might be considered your disciples. Consider what you are teaching these followers, as opposed to what you might *really want* to teach them.
- Share what has happened as you and your accountability partner have tried to show love better in your families.
- It might seem like an odd idea, but what could we humans learn from pets that might actually strengthen our relationships and make it easier for others to keep on loving us faithfully? Do you think animals might be closer to the unconditional love with which God began Creation? If so, why?

mentoring

encouraging youth to be disciples of Christ and mentors to others



Pastor Mark McCleary began his pastoral career in 1974 after receiving his Bachelor of Arts in theology and a minor in history from Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama. He earned his Master of Divinity degree in 1978 from Andrews University Theological Seminary and his Doctor of Ministry degree from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1998. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from NOVA Southeastern University and plans to graduate in June 2012.

Dr. McCleary continued to gain experience in spiritual leadership through the years, beginning in 1974 as an associate evangelist in Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas. He now serves as the senior pastor of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington, D.C.

Dr. McCleary is affiliated with the Faith-Based Community Association Partnership (FBCAP) and the Metro Area Ministerium of Seventh-day Adventists. He has written several publications, "A Guide to Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts", "Gospel Presentation," "A Comprehensive Study Guide: Back to Basics," and "A Study Guide and Workbook: Daniel and Revelation." These are available online at <http://www.firstsdachurch.org/pastor/books.html>.

Pastor McCleary is the loving husband of Queenie and their union has been blessed with two sons, Brian and Michael, and a daughter, Michelle. Pastor McCleary says his sincere goal is to be a role model of Christian values in order to inspire positive lifestyle transformation in others.



DISCIPLESHIP—MENTORING FOR YOUTH

By Dr. Mark McCleary

objectives

- To encourage youth to be disciples of Christ and mentors to other youth
- To provide basic understanding of discipleship and mentoring as correlating endeavors
- To inspire youth to be productive stewards in view of social well-being and Kingdom building

big idea

As a youth, you are uniquely wired to reach other youth with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Scriptural Connection: Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Timothy 4:12-16

the journey

The year 2012 has been designated as “The Year of Discipleship” by the Youth Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The following guide has been produced primarily, but not exclusively, for youth and young adults. It comprises a format that focuses on discipleship and mentoring of young people on their journey toward an authentic relationship with Jesus.

I want to highlight the congruence between the concepts of discipleship and mentoring. Discipleship involves following a teacher as Peter, James, John, and the others followed Jesus. On the other hand, mentoring highlights the role of the teacher or coach toward his followers, such as a basketball coach to his players or someone with a particular expertise to his or her student/mentoree. Thus, this guide emphasizes the dual roles of following and leading—discipleship and mentoring—in the context of youth-to-youth interaction.

how can I benefit from a discipleship-mentoring experience?

- Start with family members (i.e., parents, guardians, siblings).
- Seek same-sex role models who have demonstrated their effectiveness in discipleship and/or mentoring.
- Practice discipleship and mentoring with youth who want your involvement.
- Learn what discipleship or mentoring ministries are available at your church.
- Research successful discipleship and mentoring programs.

what can I do to help someone begin the discipleship journey?

Why not use a functional tool like my *Gospel Presentation* guidebook? This booklet consists of twelve steps for leading someone to a conscious relationship with Jesus. This method is more directed and purposeful in its approach to making disciples of Jesus. Of course if another approach works better for you, feel free to use that method. But we must go beyond the notion and practice of merely leading an individual to complete a set of Bible lessons and pass an oral examination in order to be baptized and voted as a member of a congregation.

Rehearse the steps (on page 65 of the *Gospel Presentation* guidebook) and reflect on their key phrases and intent. They comprise a tool for helping you lead other unsaved youth to a relationship with Jesus Christ. Memorize these twelve guidelines, listen actively, and you will become a youth-fisher of men and catcher of born-again individuals, many of whom will be youth like yourself. Is not this the essence of discipleship? The fulfilling of Jesus' Great Commission in a one-to-one approach.

the youth-mentor

"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country," stated the 35th President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, during his inauguration speech. He was challenging Americans to seek to work and live for the common good and not by an ethos of rugged individualism that espoused personal interest by any means necessary at the expense of others.

It might seem ironic to exhort youth to be mentors because often they need the same themselves as they mature into productive adulthood. Nevertheless, their personal need for mentoring does not negate the need for youth fulfilling the same for other youth. Someone said, "When you learn, teach," and "When you receive, give." Both statements are indicative of mentoring. In fact, the best mentors are those who learn and receive from others and in turn share their life lessons with their peers during informal and formal times of giving and teaching.

Gospel Presentation Steps:



1. Obtain permission to enter the other person's space.
2. "May I share something with you?"
3. If "Yes" to # 2, "Do you have the assurance of eternal life?" (1 John 5:11-13)
4. Check up question, "If God asked you, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' What would your response be?" (Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 5:15-17)
5. "Why do you think it is a free gift?" Use an illustration of breaking the law (eg. traffic)—establish guilt.
6. Bible references for human guilt (1 John 3:4; Romans 3:23; 6:23)
7. "Could I/you pay our sin-guilt penalty?"
"Yes—consequences?" "No, Alternative?" (John 3:16)
8. Accepting Jesus' sacrifice pays our debt. It justifies us before the Father and reconciles our relationship with Him.
9. "We need more than Jesus' death" (Romans 5:10,19)
10. "Do you want to accept Jesus' provision for you receiving eternal life?" By faith and prayer of confession and acceptance.
11. "Welcome!" (John 1:12; 6:37)
12. Caution:
 - "Don't look to your goodness—legalism; Pharasism (Ephesians 2:9; Titus 3:5)
 - "Don't look to your badness—discouragement (Hebrews 12:2; 4:14-16)

(McCleary, 2006: 31, 32)

For information on getting a copy of the *Gospel Presentation* guidebook contact the author, Dr. Mark McCleary, at QMachmm@aol.com.

how can a youth take advantage of mentoring opportunities?

- Begin by forming genuine friendships with other youth.
- Connect with another youth by suggesting and scheduling a Bible study session.
- Suggest and establish, with pastoral blessing, a youth prayer ministry (i.e., group meeting or prayer line).
- Start a youth book reading group.
- Coordinate a discipleship training ministry for youth to use *The Gospel Presentation* tool to lead other youth to a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

to the discipleship and/or mentoring leaders

It is likely your church does not have nor ever has had a ministry specifically focused on youth fulfilling the roles of discipleship and/or mentoring. Well, “To be or not to be, ah, that is the question,” according to Macbeth. In other words, dare to be a youth discipler or mentor like explorers Lewis and Clark, who blazed a trail to the Northwest United States; or Booker T. Washington, who walked 100’s of miles to attend Hampton University and eventually began Tuskegee University; or James Naismith, who invented the game of basketball at a youth recreation facility so boys and girls could develop their physical, mental, and social skills; or Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who invested all she had into His formative training so that He might “increase in wisdom and stature and in favor of God and man” (Luke 2:52). She disciplined and mentored Him so well, He one day commissioned His disciples and mentors to “Go into all the world and do likewise” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

practical ways to lead out in discipleship and/or mentorship training

1. Recruit youth disciples via public and private media.
 - Use church announcement periods, bulletins, bulletin boards, and flyers.
 - Use face-to-face, email, phone, or other electronic media.
2. Determine a meeting schedule that is best for the group of trainees.
 - Distribute, collect, analyze, and report the individual group member’s multiple meeting options.

- Use the same media options for recruiting and announcing the meeting schedule.
3. Maintain an updated roster of all disciplers and mentors (i.e., name, address, phone, email). Use this list for mass communication.
 4. Use this roster for your prayer list also. Without their personal information, share this list with your prayer ministry leaders and group for systematic intercession.
 5. Establish a meeting format—this can be at church, home, or other informal settings. Meetings should not last more than 45-60 minutes—one half for discipleship and the other half for mentoring. Leave about a third for actual practice, questions, and answers.
 6. Maintain summary records of meetings and activities to report to pastor, assigned or elder-sponsor, youth ministry, and church board and business meetings.

discip/mentor connecting with discip/mentoree

1. Invite discip/mentoree to church or church-sponsored event with you (Hebrew 10:25).
2. Encourage discip/mentoree to enroll in Sabbath school class or other church-sponsored youth activities that appeal to their interest (2 Timothy 2:15).
3. Delegate discip/mentoree to proactive, hospitable, and Christ-centered individuals.
4. Encourage discip/mentoree who would like to be baptized after completing the Gospel Presentation and/or Bible studies to respond to the appeal for baptism (Acts 2:41).
5. Offer to accompany disciples/mentorees who are ready for baptism as they make their public response to accept Jesus as Savior and join His church (Acts 2:47).
6. Encourage and offer to educate disciples/mentorees of the importance of continuing in prayer (1Thessalonians; Matthew 17:21).
7. Encourage the discip/mentoree to practice the habit of reading God's word for knowledge and growth (2 Peter 3:18).

reflection

1. What do you think about yourself as a disciple and/or mentor?
2. What do you think others might say are the primary factors that make you suitable as a discipler and/or mentor?
3. What would others say are your major priorities that make you suitable or unsuitable as a disciple and/or mentor?
4. What do you think it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
5. What do you think it means to be a mentor?
6. What factors might prevent you from being a good disciple and/or mentor?

application

As a growing young man in my neighborhood, I used to hear people say of a hot issue or during a confrontation, “Talk is cheap.” In other words, what we say needs to be backed up by what we do. Our actions need to be where our mouth is. Researchers make a distinction between one’s “espoused theory” and one’s “theory in use.” This analysis is similar to my previous two descriptions above. My point is that all that has been shared concerning discipleship and mentoring is espoused theory, profession, or talk unless you apply it, move beyond profession to action, and put it to use.

Ask God to help you and guide you to fulfill your call to discipleship and/or mentoring. The following are questions you might ask yourself to express such help and guidance:

- How can you change your schedule to ensure proper discipleship and/or mentorship training?
- What and who are positive influences in your life that are helping you develop into a productive disciple and/or mentor?
- What is the single most important factor for increasing your success as a disciple and/or mentor?
- How, when, and where is it best for focusing on God’s grace for electing and empowering you as a disciple and/or mentor?

personal prayer time

- Thank God for expressing His love to you by calling you to faithful stewardship as a disciple and/or mentor.
- Pray that God will give you discernment to avoid pitfalls and take advantage of opportunities to fulfill your discipleship and/or mentorship.
- Ask God to use you to effectively and positively reach other youth to His glory, for social edification, and the Devil's horriification.

REFERENCE:

McCleary, Mark (2006). *The Gospel Presentation: A Step-by-Step Guide on How to Lead Someone to Jesus*, Burtonsville, MD: McCleary Publishing.

Growing Disciples Inventory

A disciple is one who responds in faith and obedience to the gracious call of Christ to follow Him. Discipleship is not something we do alone, only on Sabbath or during a seminar. Discipleship is about growing spiritually. Closer to God, self, and others. Daily. Forever.

Take an Inventory of your spiritual walk today. Here's how: Respond to the 20 statements below. Score your answers. Ask the Holy Spirit and Christian friends to guide you. Serve and equip others using the two processes you score higher in. Plan to grow in the two processes you score lower in.

How often is this true of you? Circle one number for each commitment.	Rarely /Never	Not Often	Quite Often	Regularly /Always	Write the number you circled in the white space.			
I am developing a dynamic relationship with God.	1	2	3	4				
I keep learning more about what it means to be a growing Christian.	1	2	3	4				
I am seeking opportunities in all my daily activities to minister to others.	1	2	3	4				
I am teaching others how to build Christ-like relationships.	1	2	3	4				
I am discovering who I am in relationship to Christ.	1	2	3	4				
I keep learning more about who God is.	1	2	3	4				
I am helping one or more friends to grow in their relationship with God.	1	2	3	4				
I am helping others to study and obey God's Word.	1	2	3	4				
I am developing Christ-centered family relationships.	1	2	3	4				
I keep learning more about the human fall from God's original plan	1	2	3	4				
I volunteer to serve in my community without reward, outside my family.	1	2	3	4				
I am showing others how to live as committed, healthy Christians.	1	2	3	4				
I am developing Christ-like relationships with church members.	1	2	3	4				
I keep learning more about God's grace and plan of salvation.	1	2	3	4				
I am supporting my church's ministries with my time and/or money.	1	2	3	4				
I am helping others discover where God is working in their lives and world.	1	2	3	4				
I am developing positive relationships with those who are not part of my church or family – at work, in my community.	1	2	3	4				
I keep learning more about how God has provided everything needed to restore me to His image.	1	2	3	4				
I am helping my church tell the story of Jesus e.g. friendship evangelism.	1	2	3	4				
I am teaching others how to use spiritual gifts in God's work.	1	2	3	4				
TOTALS	To score, total each column →							
Processes: C=Connecting; U=Understanding; M=Ministering; E=Equipping Learn more: growingfruitfuldisciples.org Full GDI: inventory.growingdisciples.info					C	U	M	E

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APPLICATION FOR A MENTOR



Participant, if you would like to work with a mentor during the period of these discipleship sessions, please fill out this form and send it as an attachment to _____

(Name and phone number of facilitator/contact person)

Your Contact Information	
Name	
Street Address 1	
Street Address 2	
City, State & Zip Code	
Preferred Phone	
E-Mail Address	

How can your mentor help you?	
Please check any of the following topics that you would like your mentor to specifically address.	
<input type="checkbox"/> To begin a relationship with Christ	<input type="checkbox"/> Managing my resources (stewardship)
<input type="checkbox"/> Healthful living	<input type="checkbox"/> Prayer (can be for yourself, family members, friends, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding the Bible	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding my relationship with myself and others
<input type="checkbox"/> Time management (stewardship)	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding my relationship with God
<input type="checkbox"/> Transforming my devotional life	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing positive relationships outside the church
<input type="checkbox"/> Leading others to Christ	<input type="checkbox"/> Embracing the mission to bring others to Christ

<input type="checkbox"/> Learning to trust God	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing the needs of the less fortunate
<input type="checkbox"/> Discipling others	<input type="checkbox"/> Committing to live by biblical standards of sexual morality
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding biblical truths	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding that God forgives sin and restores brokenness

What is your primary motivation for attending these discipleship sessions?

Please describe how a mentor could best assist you.

Do you have any special requests for a mentor?

How would you prefer to communicate with your mentor?

<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Skype
<input type="checkbox"/> IM	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Commitment as a Mentee

Participants who wish to have a mentor are asked to carry on a regular conversation with the mentor. Mentees should try to respond to a mentor’s emails at least once a week. This regular contact helps to build the relationship between the mentor and the participant. Persons in the mentor program should contact the session facilitator/coordinator or their pastor if they need assistance beyond the help of their mentor. If a participant no longer wishes to participate in the program, or does not feel their mentor is the right match, then the participant should contact the facilitator to make them aware of the situation.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The development of an effective curriculum is a multi-step, ongoing, and cyclical process. The process progresses from evaluating what we are doing now, to designing an improved program, to implementing a new program and back to evaluating the revised program. Your honest review and analysis of the information provided, its impact on lives (yours and others), as well as on people's perception of its strengths and weaknesses will help form the foundation of future curriculums and resources as we look forward to developing other curricula to assist in the discipleship process of our youth and young adults.

Please send your comments or concerns to dunchiem@gc.adventist.org or write to:

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Silver Spring, MD 20904



THE POWER OF ONE

- Honoring Jesus
- Revealing His Kingdom
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