



2022

Youth **DEVOTIONAL**

JANUARY - MARCH



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Youth Ministries
GENERAL CONFERENCE

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Editor's Note:

Pako Mokgwane,

Associate Youth Director
General Conference

I want to personally thank you for taking the time to read this devotional. The idea behind this book is to encourage and challenge Seventh-day Adventist young adults and their leaders. Challenge them to be intentional in identifying, connecting, and establishing—or in some cases re-establishing—relationships with disengaged and disconnecting members of their youth group. The first thing we must do in trying to reach missing members is to acknowledge that while this is a **YOU PROBLEM** (my problem), it is also an **EVERYONE** problem. It is a problem that is too big for you to fix alone. You need the Lord and others to help you.

Getting your young people back to Jesus is not going to be an overnight fix. It will take time. **BUT** remember that patience and consistency is the key. Know who they are and be attentive to their stories.

So, as you read the pages of this book, we hope you will be inspired, and that the challenges throughout the book will encourage you to recommit to reach those you are called to serve.

#IWillGo

CHECK OUT OUR TIP PAGE AT THE BACK OF THIS BOOK



A Word from the President

"What Will You Do for Christ?"

Ted Wilson

President

Seventh-day Adventist Church

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12, NKJV

Throughout biblical history, God has called young people to accomplish His purposes and plans. The youth have energy and creativity that the older generation simply does not have. We read of Daniel and his three friends, sent into Babylon to witness to a pagan king; David, who used his musical talent to soothe Saul's possessed mind; Esther, who saved her people through miraculous means; and Isaiah, who, when called to serve God, answered: "I will go!"

Dear friend, today God is looking for young people to play a vital part in His last day proclamation. He wants you to be an example—one who is completely committed to Jesus Christ and wholly allows the Holy Spirit to work in your life powerfully and wonderfully.

We read in a wonderful little volume by Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, that "your voice, your influence, your time—all these are gifts from God and are to be used in winning souls to Christ" (p. 529). Whether it be through social media ministry, book distribution, spending One Year in Mission, or outreach through your local church or youth group, the Lord is calling you to share with others the wonderful news of His soon return.

Will you say, "Yes, Lord, I will go! I will do everything I can to share with my neighbors, with my friends, with my loved ones, this precious, wonderful message." You see, God wants you to be involved. We are told in the Spirit of Prophecy that He could have tasked the angels with this responsibility, but what a privilege and blessing it is to be involved in the work of salvation!



About this Devotional

Maria Manderson

Project Coordinator

The purpose of this devotional is to awaken a passion in us to embrace the Church's mandate to restore, rebuild, and revive. Like Nehemiah, when he was getting ready to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem that were torn down, he sought the Lord and then went out boldly. We can do the same; seek the Lord and get to work. Nehemiah was there to see God rebuild His people. People's lives were changed, the builders were built-up. And guess what? It took only 52 days to rebuild that wall. A miracle? Yes. But how did they do it? Everyone had their part of the wall to build....that's how they did it. 52 days.

This 52 weeks devotional is intended to help restore, rebuild, and revive us. The main goal is to inspire us to go out there and rebuild faith and hope in people who have walked away from their faith or have become disengaged in the church and its message. Do not feel overwhelmed, do it, one person, at a time. That is how you will reach the missing young people in your church....one person at a time. Stand at your block of the wall. We all have a portion of the "wall" that God has called us to build/rebuild.

In 52 days, the entire city wall was rebuilt. In 52 days, the walls were rebuilt, and lives were changed. In 52 weeks, lives can be rebuilt; lives can be changed. With God and you, it can be done. Let's do it.

#IWillGo

CHECK OUT OUR TIP PAGE AT THE BACK OF THIS BOOK



Youth DEVOTIONAL

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Before You Go...



Pako Mokgwane
Associate Youth Director
General Conference

Bible Text: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (John 13:3)

Three very important points jump out of this text. First, the command to love; secondly, that love is an action word; and thirdly, the example of Jesus, who has loved us. The command to love and the motivation to love strengthens the force of the action (to love).

Seeking former church members is a call that every disciple of Christ must answer. In most cases, we worry about former members, yet we do nothing to address the issues that caused them to leave in the first place. It's about time we look inward as young people to establish our own goals (OGs) so that we may be intentional about cleansing the chambers of every space in the physical sanctuary and put things in place to help retain and nurture those who join the church. Following that, self-examination is necessary. Change begins with self. We must not expect a miracle "to happen" ...the miracle is us. Every member bears personal responsibility. Be the change you want to see.

Just as the ground is tilled before the seed is planted, so should the surrounding/relationships in the church. We cannot afford to continue sweeping issues under the rug. Forgiveness and reconciliation must happen for joy, love, and laughter to be fully and liberally expressed. It is not the attractiveness of the building, the swag on Sabbath, or the ability to recite all the memory verses of the quarter, instead it is the open, honest relationships—the ones that increase authenticity among each other that is important. When these behaviors become commonplace the unity, love, and understanding among members is enhanced, and acceptance and a sense of belonging is the result. Cosmetic spirituality and relationships will always fail. So, before you go out to seek former members, love the current members. Become vulnerable with each other. Jesus, our example, did it. He loved us when we least deserved His love. The current members must be retained through love and caring. Only then will the church become attractive to former members. They must find a landing space that is warm and kind. *(By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. John 13:35, King James Version)*

Challenge:

What are you doing to foster a welcoming and loving environment in your local church? Speak to three members about this and make a pact to bring about the necessary changes.

Extra Reading:

Stevens, L. (2019). Inter-America Division Embarks on Mission to Seek Former Church Members
[Click here to read article](#)



Herd or Team?

Ignazio Barbuscia
Youth Ministries Director
Italian Union

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. (John 15:13)

Do you know the difference between a herd and a team? Being part of a herd means joining a group by conforming to dominant behaviors and passively following others. Being part of a team (or group) means working side by side ready to sacrifice for the good of each other or the community. To be united and coordinated for a common function. Many animals organize in groups, but often it is not the good of the community that drives them to do so. For example, bison move in groups, but each bison tries to gain an inside position to shelter from predatory attacks. They stay in the herd for their own interest, not that of the community. On the other hand, bees and ants are true team players. Research has shown that they work together as one and are even willing to die for the good of the colony. In a hive, everyone helps the community, even if it means that they have to die. In beehives and anthills, the good of the community is more important than the good of the individual bee or ant. In fact, these communities do not behave as a union of many individual animals, but as a single individual. Jesus had formed a group. He called them one by one. A small group with which to share more intimately the experiences and joys of the Gospel. One of the strengths of a small group is that it is easier to develop an atmosphere of mutual understanding and acceptance. Jesus would say to that group he called friends and to all of us, "Greater love has no one than to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). May each of us discover the importance of being part of a team made up of various elements that are strongly connected to a happy and united group that does not think only of itself.

Challenge:

Write or call three of your friends, who were once part of your church group and now no longer attend. Ask them how they are doing.

Extra Reading:

Gillespie V.B., Gillespie T. J. *Hey! Love Them and They Will Come!* John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry and AdventSource (2011).

Make the Fruits Abide



Magulilo J. Mwakalonge

Youth Ministries Director
East-Central Africa Division

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."
John 15:16

I love avocado. Our family has three avocado trees in our garden. This year all three trees produced sumptuously; so many fruits that they started to ripen almost at the same time and were in danger of rotting. But getting rotten is not the only danger the fruits face. They can also be stolen or eaten by animals, get diseases, or be destroyed by bad weather.

Jesus, in John 15, reminds His followers that the gospel privileges and advantages that we are enjoying are the results of His initiatives to choose and appoint us. Christ's followers will do well to seek to know the mission that is set before them, lest they disappoint the one who chose them. Jesus states the reason here – "that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain..."

As followers of Christ, love should prompt us to embrace our church's "I Will Go" initiative and see it as an opportunity to bear fruits of the spirit, more specifically the fruit of success in saving souls for Christ.

The expectation to make the fruit "remain" is embedded in the one bearing them. Just as we are keen to bring new souls to Christ, we need to be equally interested to make them stay permanently for eternal life. We are called to bear quality fruits that will last. To jealously present to Christ pure virgins (2 Cor. 11:2), the souls of good quality, committed fully and permanently to one husband and Lord, Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus announced the will of His father that: "All He has given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up at the last day" (John 6:39). Near the end of his earthly ministry, He exclaimed: "I kept them in Your name . . . and none of them is lost . . ." (John 17:12).

Pray that this mind of Christ Jesus will be in you. God is waiting for you to say today, "I will go bear the fruit, I will go make them abide forever, and I will go find the missing members." Get involved in establishing the missing members database, establishing connection teams, and make the best use of opportunities available during the *Home Coming Sabbath* and the *Youth Spiritual Commitment Celebration Sabbath* to celebrate their return.

Challenge:

All around us members get discouraged, offended, tired, overwhelmed with false doctrines, and backslide. This week begin looking for one of those members and labor prayerfully to bring her or him back to Christ and His Church. Christ died for them and they belong to Him, and with God by our side we should go and seek them.

#IWillGo

Lazar House



Mwebesa Ivan

MEDICAL STUDENT (MBChB, Gulu University)
Gulu University, PCM Ambassador

Asst. Stewardship and Development Minister; Gulu University, Northern Uganda Field
Gulu University Seventh-day Adventist Student Association (GUSDASA)

***I was naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited Me:
I was in prison, and ye came to Me." Matthew 25:36***

"Our message is a worldwide message. And while means is not to be absorbed in one line of work, so that the last gospel message cannot be carried into new fields, the medical missionary work is not in any wise to be disparaged; it is not to be represented as an inferior work. The world is a great lazar house; it is corrupted under the inhabitants thereof, and misery is universal." EGW: Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 8, p. 169.2

"The world is a great lazar house." This is the stark reality of our current world. Even as drug production skyrockets, medical knowledge increases, and technology advances, we still have not begun to curb the disease incidences and burdens in the world. Instead, at alarmingly dreadful rates, diseases continue to tighten its firm grip on the human race. Each day, hour, minute, and second someone is diagnosed with a disease. As a result, pain, sorrow, death, and grief attacks the lives of many people. Yet, the majority still holds the position that this is the Lord's providence. That there is nothing they can do about it. Perhaps, only living to wait for their turn to meet the unavoidable—to accept what life is inevitably going to hand them.

"Disease is an effort of nature to free the system from conditions that result from a violation of the laws of health" (EGW: Ministry of Healing, p. 127).

Disease is from the enemy. Through disobedience to the laws of health many have lost the most precious God-given treasure, health. Generation after generation, the race of Adam is deteriorating in the strength needed to resist these diseases. Disabilities, debilitation, and depression are lifelong companions of many in the world today. When He was on earth, and even now, Jesus' response to such a state is compassion. We read that He was moved with compassion and healed all their diseases; sometimes, in cases of death, He resurrected. Even in the last fleeting seconds of life, He saved! His mission was, and is, to bring complete restoration. People were filled with joy and praises. What an example to follow.

Our loving Jesus has given us a health message and the assurance that He will heal us, not only physically but also spiritually—for by His stripes we are healed! Complete and final healing will occur at His second coming, when Christ will transform our bodies, freeing them from sickness and death. This Christ will do because, "He took our infirmities and bore our sickness." When many are hopeless, we can lift up the Saviour who died for them and is willing to save. He is the greatest physician of all time and His presence brings life and comfort.

Will you follow His footsteps? Will you go to the beds of those who are ill? Will you teach the health message faithfully? Will you lift up the Saviour—the source of healing? In simple faith will you pray with the sick? Will you VISIT the sick?

#IWillGo



A Functioning Vessel

Elias Kasika

*Youth Ministries Director
Northern Tanzania Union Conference*

"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (Philippians 2:1, 2)

Adventist Youth as well as other church members should know about the Adventist message—the message of salvation through faith in Christ that transforms our lives. The result of Christ working in and through them will positively impress those they mingle with to imitate the biblical lifestyle. The Adventist Youth motto, "The love of Christ compels me" **and** the mission, "The salvation of youth through Jesus Christ. We understand youth ministry to be that work of the church that is conducted for, with, and by young people" has no effect if it cannot be applied in the lives of those claiming to believe it. Why this strong emphasis?

"All Christians are called to be practical theologians, disciples whose obedience to God in Church and in world puts our truth calls into practical. Theology that goes unmanned and unnoticed is powerless to change lives or ministries. Practical Theology assumes that we live our conditions about who God is and how God works in the world, and that we practice, our Theology most faithfully when we do it on purpose." (GC Senior Youth Ministry Handbook – Copyright 2013)

In Philippians 2:1-4 the Apostle Paul outlines the basic behavior we should be engaged in as true disciples of Christ. The emphasis of these activities is to give encouragement to those who have lost hope and comfort those in sorrow through the love of Christ. Those who are connected using Christ method, automatically feel the urge of fighting selfish ambitions, by surrendering themselves to God, to be used as He sees fit. Philippians 2:1-4 is a call to a personal commitment to show love for each other; operate in the unity that Christ expects of us; do nothing according to our own selfish ambition or vanity; and to not only think of ourselves, but also to think of others. Yes, in other words, Christ is calling each youth and whoever wants to imitate His humility to live a Christian life that demonstrates His love.

Slowly but surely, every local church can apply this method and organize Youth Service Teams of men and women who, not only connect, but help to unite the whole church and make it active in serving and functioning as a vessel to draw others to Christ. Let us pray for the Spirit of Christ to revive the youth in the Church to achieve this divine purpose.

#IWillGo

A House for Two



Yevhen Alokhin
Youth Ministries Director
Ukrainian Union Conference

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." (Psalm 91:1, 2)

While serving young people, I often travel and visit unfamiliar cities. Sometimes I must spend the nights on trains, sometimes on buses, and sometimes driving a car. And there are other times when I may find myself in a new place where I do not know anyone. But, on some occasions I spend the night with my good friends. It is an amazing time when we can communicate, support each other, remember many things, and pray for and with each other, even stay-up until late in the night. However, no matter what the conditions of the trips are—good or bad—there is one desire that never leaves me, I want to go home. Because it is always better at home!

God says there is one place where you will feel most comfortable, cozy, and protected. A place where you are always welcome, where you are always expected, regardless of what state you are in and what is happening to you. This place is His HOME. This is the place where you meet and communicate with Him. The place where you can ask questions, even the most inconvenient ones, where you can get answers. Where you can feel support and acceptance. Where you are always loved.

However, there is one "but". You will be comfortable there only on one condition - if you stay all the time.

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High" – He, who stays there always.

His home is not a hotel or a hostel where you can rent a room and stay for one night when you feel bad, sleep, and in the morning go on about your business, forgetting about this place in a few days, and never return.

Home is your permanent place of residence, where you always stay. A place where you want to return, where you want to be!

One more detail.

This house is only for two.

One place is already occupied by Christ. The second is free.

The decision is yours!

Appeal:

Live in God's presence constantly. Enjoy His love. Daily receive from Him relevant messages, through which He will touch your heart. In order to change you, He needs "full access" to your life. Do not only let the Lord become a part of your life but make Him your whole life!



A Special Time

*Alexander Shigin,
Broadcaster
Caucasus Union Mission*

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

To understand the relevance of the Sabbath School, it is best to break this term into two components: Sabbath and School.

Each of us, in the past, present, and future, somehow faced the concept of "learning" or "studying". The biggest difference between regular school or university classes and Sabbath school is that they are not focused on God.

Since the beginning of the creation of the world, God has separated the seventh day, the Sabbath, for worship and rest. It is on the Sabbath Day that God wants to communicate with us and reveal Himself. Opening only one book-the Bible, we have access to interesting historical facts, events, and stories of outstanding personalities, as well as very serious, deep truths. These stories and encounters can radically change our way of thinking, change our lifestyle, and give peace to our mind. But above all, we have access to a most loving God.

For many, a secular school is a place of balance between obtaining knowledge and implementing it. On the other hand, the Sabbath School is aimed at completely satisfying us with a spiritual component revealing God and the diversity of His character. Sabbath School allows you to occupy hearts and minds with God and His presence. The presence of God in our lives makes us "the light of the world" (Matthew 5: 14). Now, we are able to fulfill the great commission of Jesus Christ: "Go and make disciples of all the nations"(Matthew 28: 19). Today, the click of a mouse can give you access to almost anything, yet there are many in the world who still do not know Christ and the true meaning of His life, His saving death, and His resurrection.

Anyway, dear friend, each of us unconsciously becomes both a "student" and a "teacher." Two important questions are, What we can learn? and, What can we teach the people around us? The Sabbath School helps us to gain valuable knowledge and become a conduit of this knowledge, changing the world, and revealing Christ to it.

The students and teachers of the Sabbath School are friends of Jesus, whom He will recognize when He returns to this earth for the second time. While many will hear the words of Jesus "I do not know you... go away," the disciples in the school of Christ will exclaim with joy "Here is our God!" Jesus will know them!

Appeal: Try to find some new young people this week and invite them to Sabbath School. Try to find out their impressions and inspire the students and teachers of the Sabbath School to be active in spreading the message about Jesus.



Healing Relationships

Roman Chisacov
Youth Ministries Director
Euro-Asia Division

"So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend"
(Exod. 33:11)

Why do we need friends?

It is comforting to know that you are surrounded by people ready to accept you as you are and help you in a difficult situation. It is especially pleasant to meet such friends at least once a week, on Sabbaths, and maintain friendship with them for many years. Nevertheless, sometimes you do not even realize that such people are near you.

When I was 12 years old I got into trouble when I rode my bike without permission. After a bad fall from the bike, I realized that blood was flowing down my leg. I managed to stop the bleeding but was too afraid to tell anyone about it because I had taken the bike without permission. This is what children sometimes do.

However, the consequences were more complicated than I could have imagined. Within a few days, my leg had doubled in size. I had a serious infection and needed urgent surgical intervention. Time passed and I had to go through four surgeries. I did not attend school for a whole year and had to learn how to walk again. It was a very difficult and dangerous period of my life. For more than a year, I was bedridden and had no way to communicate with my friends.

However, one Sabbath morning I saw a group of folks in our yard. These were my friends from the Sabbath School class who came to pray for me and support me. It was very nice to see them again. My friends visited me multiple times during the year. Each visit gave me energy and strengthened our relationships. At the same time, I was thanking God for the miracles He had performed for me and for the friends He had given me.

Twenty-five years have passed since these events, but I continue to remember these meetings with warmth. These memories help me to understand the importance of the presence of church family and friends in our lives. As Christians, we have a special advantage. By reading the Holy Scriptures and attending church every Sabbath, we find not only Christian friends, but also our main Friend – our Savior Jesus Christ.

Relationships are extremely important. There are friends, God, and I. Only God does not change, because He is perfect! However, we need to change and grow to gain spiritual maturity. If we are not ready for change then we may not be able to build healthy relationships. Relationships are a special tool that God uses to influence a person and help us to improve our character. However, the greatest thing that can happen to us is when we can talk with God and build a relationship with Him, just as Moses did.

Appeal:

Try to analyze your relationship with God and your friends today. Write down the changes that you need and include them in your prayer list. Thank God for the Sabbath school, your friends, and His constant desire to prepare you for meeting Him, and make Christ your best friend.



The Tension

Narcis Dragomir,
Youth Pastor: Sagunto Church
Chaplain: Adventist Campus, Sagunto, Spain

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me (John 15:4)

"Retention." We hear it in church very often. What can we do to prevent young people from leaving the church? The issue may be in the answer rather than the question. We should, perhaps, reflect on: *Why* do we want young people to stay in the church?

Retention implies *keeping, storing, or taking care of*. Instead of focusing on keeping those who we currently have, we could show the great things we have that will inspire and attract them to be part of the church. Then (spoiler alert) we got it! That's the gospel. The idea of *retention* requires balancing the permanent *tension* between what they want and what the leader wants them to know. If we dedicate all of our time to this task we will inevitably burn out.

The young people who are part of our church have the responsibility of taking the gospel to the world. If we forget this, whatever we do will be pointless. When the church switches from making disciples who are focused on understanding, living, and proclaiming the gospel to mere consumers who only listen and live morally correct lives, we will definitely find ourselves in that tension between what the church biblically is and what we say the church is. This will inevitably lead to deterioration.

We were called to *proclaim* not to *entertain*. We will never be able to compete with the kind of entertainment the world has to offer. However, it will not become a problem if we offer the gospel instead in its pure form as an alternative: a life changing experience made possible through the saving power of Jesus Christ.

We were called to bear fruits, not to consume them. In John 15:4, Jesus tells us: "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me". If our life does not bear fruits (Galatians 5:22-23) we shouldn't be afraid of changing it. If our actions don't help us love others and Jesus more, we will not be making disciples (John 13:35). We will be consumers.

reDefining Church



*Jonatan Tejel,
Youth Ministries Director
Inter-European Division*

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." Luke 15:20

I am a pastor's kid (PK). As a child our family moved from city to city following the calls my father got as a pastor. Every time we moved, I felt the fear of going to church, wondering if I would be accepted, loved, and considered important. A church with no love loses its meaning and stops growing. One of the reasons for the 1st century church's growth was the way they loved each other and the world. Love should be a defining characteristic of the local church. I still remember the churches I have been a member of; in some, people were accepted rapidly, and in others, you had to be very strong in your beliefs to keep on attending.

Most of the time when you think about church, you think about an hierarchical entity, or in a building in which people get together to listen to some music and enjoy (not always) a sermon based on the Bible. If we have this picture in mind when we talk about church, we will be far away from what the primary purpose is... not a building but the people.

When I was a teenager, I struggled with the church's attitude towards me (and others), and for a while became somewhat rebellious. After two-three years of rebellion I felt like the prodigal son and recognized that I had strayed far from Jesus and needed to go back to Him. I had a conversation with my mom about my fear about how the church would treat me, how they would look at me, and how they would talk to me. My mom suggested that I have a conversation with the leader of a recently formed singing group and ask if they would include me in the group. My mom's hope was that including me in the singing group would start the process of reconciliation. I approached the leader and his response surprised me: "You cannot be part of this singing group; this is only for an elite group of people, and you are not part of that elite group". I was crushed! What a gracious way to reconcile a young person who wanted to come back to church. I may not be the greatest singer in the world, but I could sing well.

Sometimes we forget what it means to be church. I suggest that we should rethink church. What really is church? One thing COVID-19 has taught us is that church is not just a place, it is a personal experience, that happens to take place most of the times in a building. Let's live out church. Let us be church—and I do not mean only when we get together as a community of believers. Let us also live out church in the wider community, with people who do not think, believe, or act like we do. People who do not know our God. People who once knew our God but have now chosen to walk away from the faith. Let us live out church and make its values change and shape our character into a reflection of Jesus. Let us create a church of welcoming people who are trying day by day to reflect Jesus' character.

Let us work every day to build stronger relationships in our churches and in our communities. And remember, while we are redefining *Church*, we cannot forget our need to build a deeper and lasting relationship with God—we must find time to focus on our own spiritual growth, and development.

My prayer for you is that as you grow spiritually your heart will be opened to hear the Holy Spirit and accept God's call to go wherever he wants you to go. Immerse yourself in the mission of sharing the Good News of salvation and Jesus' love. Go wherever He wants you to go. Be ready to lead in any capacity that the Lord will call you to.

"I Will Go".



What's My Value?

*Al Powell,
Youth Ministries Director
Inter-American Division*

"And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' " (Luke 15: 31, 32)

Have you ever wondered how much the elements in your body are worth? Recent research shows that 65% of your body is oxygen, 3% nitrogen, .35% potassium, among others. What is shocking, is that the value of the over fifteen elements that our bodies are made up of, is just over one dollar! As a young man or woman, you might ask yourself the question "What is my value?"

Let's look at your value based on the biblical reference in Luke 15. Here we see three different elements that are lost - a sheep, a coin, and a boy.

Let's take a closer view. The sheep probably unintentionally wandered off, maybe searching for greener pastures, just observing, and then realized that it was lost. Perhaps recognizing this, it moaned and attempted to retrace its steps. Was the sheep found?

Then the coin. It did not lose itself; it was misplaced and we see that the owner placed much value on this coin. Did the owner search night and day until the coin was found? Get this! You could be lost right where you are, no one knows nor understands – not even you know the degree to which you are lost.

Thirdly, the lost boy - well he decided to run away. He probably thought he had enough of church, the rigid principles, way too much advice. The good news is that he came to his senses; he recognized that he was lost and decided to come back home.

Both the sheep and the coin were found because of their master's passion and understanding of their value. Deliberate and intensified efforts brought the sheep home. Deliberate and intensive efforts by the master found the coin.

We too, can get lost easily. We may have to pray for someone, so they can realize that they are lost and return home. The good news is that all three were found and there was joy and celebration in heaven! This assures us of our value in life!

How much is your value? You are far more valuable than anyone could ever experience or say. Christ gave His life for you! If you are feeling lost – cry out to Jesus! He is willing and waiting to find you!

Back Home



Hiram Ruiz Lugo
Public Campus Ministry Director
Inter-American Division

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." (Luke 15:20)

There are days when you say, "today was a busy one, hopefully, I can sleep well tonight." The day I felt like this, the phone rang at midnight. On the other side of the phone, was a sad voice that said, "I'm Freddy and I'm in Freedom Park. Can you come? I need to talk to you." A thousand thoughts ran through my mind. We had lost him from church for a while and I had not heard from him, now he was calling to talk to me.

Roger Dudley, in his report on why teenagers leave the church, mentions in one of his presentations "...Small things count. When our young people are suffering – as many are – just a little **compassion**, a little **importance**, a little understanding, can be like manna from heaven for them." (*Simposio de Ministerio Juvenil, Montemorelos Nuevo León 2002*) In other words, we should give them what Christ gave us—love, compassion, and acceptance.

The night was cold and dark. The place where I was to meet him was not necessarily a safe place to meet someone at night. However, something told me that I had to go as soon as possible and give him some attention. *"Just a little bit of importance."* I was unaware of what was happening, but I felt that I had to go. I managed to put on a jacket over my pajamas with some sneakers and left home. I rode in my car in search of my mysterious date, an encounter with a young man who had a desperate cry in his heart, and now he was looking for his pastor.

My heart was racing with all kinds of questions running through my mind. Is he drunk? Is he on drugs? Has he committed a crime and is looking for an escape? With a thousand thoughts going through my mind, I arrived at the place. After looking around for some time, I saw him, sitting on a bench—waiting for his pastor. I walked to where he was and said, "Hello Freddy". What came next left me speechless. There he was—a young man crying. After many attempts, he said, through tears, "Things are not right with me, things are not right at home and things are not right in the church, so I don't go anymore". He further went on to say, "I have no place to go, and no one is interested in me. I am alone. Today, I don't know why I called you, but thank you for coming." I listened to him for almost two hours. When he was finished talking, he said, "Thank you for coming, I needed it very much. I don't know what I'm going to do with my life but thank you for coming. I'm going back home. Goodbye pastor, I don't know what will become of my life."

I saw him leave and got lost in the distance. I offered to take him home, but he did not want me to take him home. I returned to my car shivering, frustrated and sad for not being able to do more. I thought about how many individuals we have lost who are not in the church, those who did not return. Where have we failed? Why did they leave the church? Roger Dudley gives us insight into why young people are leaving the church, he says solitude, irrelevance, intolerance, convenience, personal conflicts, are some of the reasons. Doctrinal conflicts are not given as a reason by young people for them leaving the church. This is not the reason why they are leaving the church. My mind runs through all of this, and I wonder again where have we failed them?

I did not hear anything about Freddy for many years. The talk we had, ended as a farewell. From time to time, I tried to find information about him or his location. After a while, I left the city.

While in the state of Texas in the United States and preaching in a week of prayer, I saw Freddy enter the church. Though many years had passed, I could never forget his face. I was sure it was Freddy. He was well dressed and had a smile on his face. I could tell by the smile on his face that he was a changed person. I wanted to stop the sermon and run to meet him, but I couldn't. I smiled at him as he walked down the aisle and sat on the front bench. I couldn't wait to finish the sermon. Instead, I connect with Freddy during the sermon by saying, "right Freddy" while preaching.

Freddy told me that when he saw me, he said, "Pastor Hiram, I am back home." Now I see that he is well dressed and in the church with his Bible in his hand and I couldn't help but have a tear run down my cheek. What happened this time and why did Freddy come back?

As soon as I finished preaching, I went down from the rostrum and we hugged each other. "I am here", he told me, "I am a colporteur. God did not let me down, I ran away from my house, and I spent a long time struggling, but I am here close to God. I'm back pastor, I have come back home."

As a youth leader, I would like to hear many young people in our congregation say, "I'm back home in the church."

"The little things count. When our young people are suffering – as many are – just a little compassion, a little importance, a little understanding, can be like manna from heaven for them." (*Youth Ministry Symposium, Montemorelos Nuevo León 2002*).

Further Reading:

Dudley, R. (2000) Roger Dudley. *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church*. Hagerstown, Md: Review and Herald.



Coin People

*Yuliberth A. González,
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"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:10

One coin is missing, that is the problem. Even when the woman had another nine, that missing coin is going to teach us three things about church members that are missing, even when they are not separated from the church.

First, *the coin does not know what its place is*. Everyone has a place in the body of Christ. Yet, there are Christians who still don't know that they have a place here—in the body of Christ, the Church. They are unable to see their worth and are comfortably sitting in a corner, lost, collecting dust. They firmly believe that the place they are in must be where they belong since, after all, they are part of the church. A silver coin does not belong in a dusty corner and a child of God does not belong in the shadows.

A second thing is that *the coin is irreplaceable*. The woman had 9 more coins but the place of the missing one could not just be taken by any of the others. "Coin people" need to know that no one other than themselves will be able to take the place God has prepared for them.

Finally, *the coin needs help to get out of the place where it is*. The most important thing about these "coin people" at church is that they need help to get out from under the cabinet. The woman in the Bible story takes a broom and start sweeping the house. That is our part of the story. We are God's brooms in church. When we let God use us, we will go to the dusty corners of our churches, drawing out silver coins for God to polish and place them where they belong. It only takes a prayer to be used as God's instruments. It all ends with a celebration because someone very valuable and irreplaceable was missing in the home but was found. In searching for the coin, we imitate Christ who came to our dark planet searching for us.

Challenge:

What are the dusty corners of your church? Pray today for God to show you any missing coins there might be in your local church and reach out to them (text them, call them, snapchat them). Offer them a short prayer and ask that God will place them where they belong.

DIVISIONS

ECD: East-Central Africa

ESD: Euro-Asia

EUD: Inter-European

IAD: Inter-American

NAD: North American

NSD: Northern Asia-Pacific

SAD: South American

SID: Southern Africa Indian Ocean

SPD: South Pacific

SSD: Southern Asia-Pacific

SUD: Southern Asia

TED: Trans-European

WAD: West-Central Africa

ATTACHED FIELDS

1. *Chinese Union Mission*
2. *Israel Field*
3. *Middle East Northern Africa*

TIPS ON RECONNECTING WITH THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT THE CHURCH

While some people in your youth group may slip through the cracks, a healthy communication system can help youth leaders minimize this problem. Below are some tips that we hope you will find useful in your ministry.

CREATE AN OUTREACH MINISTRY.

- A. Form a group to go through the church records and get the addresses of all the missing members. Be prayerful. Do not judge them. Ask God to give you the right words to say.
- B. Send them cards inviting them to church. You may not get an immediate response, but still send them the card, at least once monthly. There is no limit to how many times you do this. Once the person responds then you will remove them from the list.
- C. Have another group that will be responsible for connecting them with the ministries in the church that they may need.
- D. Find out if there are young adults in the household and ask if it is okay to visit them. If they say okay, then two persons should visit them to reacquaint yourselves with them. This visit is to create a comfortable bond, break the ice.
- E. Ascertain their needs and follow-up with them.

REACTIVATE: There are many ways to get others involved. You can ask members to call, text, or contact missing members via social media (Facebook, messenger, Instagram, Whatsapp, etc.) If you call, write, text, or email missing members and you get no response do not give up. Keep trying. However, please be respectful of each person's time. Be tactful. Do not drive them crazy with messages.

Even if you are aware of why someone is not coming to church, please approach each person with dignity and respect. Be careful not to make them feel like they are only a number, just a body in the pew. Focus your effort on value. **TIP: PLEASE ADDRESS EACH PERSON BY THEIR NAME.**

CAPITILIZE ON YOUR EVENTS. Some of your missing members may not be in a place where they are mentally and emotionally ready to return to church. *A Barna Research study reports that 22 percent of young people who disconnect from the local church say that the church is "ignoring the problems of the real world."* However, we think that you can still find ways to communicate with them and get them involved. Invite them to your Global Youth Day community program, your Week of Prayer, and your Homecoming events. These are wonderful opportunities to engage young people without them feeling pressured into returning to church.

TIP: NEVER GUILT ANYONE INTO RETURNING TO CHURCH.

KEEP THE BACK DOOR CLOSED!

As we seek to reconnect with our missing members, let us remember to do all we can to keep those who are actively staying in church, stay in the church. Here are some ideas below:


1. Celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, etc.
2. Try to know the names of all the young people in your church. Create relationships.
3. Create an outlet for members to send in prayer requests. Create a prayer request form.
4. Develop a buddy system...each person will be accountable for at least two other persons.
5. Avoid guilting/forcing people into loving the Lord.
6. Offer different ways to get actively involved.




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