

"DISCIPLE" IS A NOUN

Popular as it may be today, the word *disciple* is a noun, not a verb. True discipleship requires *discipline*.

- **Philippians 2:12, 13** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.
- **Christian Service, p. 58** It is evident that all the sermons preached have not developed a large class of self-denying workers.

"IMITATE ME, AS I IMITATE CHRIST"

Discipleship ministry involves more than publicly preaching or even personally teaching God's Word to others. At its very core, true discipleship requires personal mentoring.

- **1 Corinthians 11:1** Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:5-7** For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.
- **Gospel Workers (1892), p. 322** Preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls. God's Spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and he places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. God requires his church to nurse those who are young in faith and experience, to go to them, not for the purpose of gossiping with them, but to pray, to speak unto them words that are "like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN HABITS

The ultimate goal of Christian faith is Christlikeness. There are essential spiritual habits every Christian must develop to be more like Jesus.

- **Luke 6:40** A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.
- **Christian Education, 122** Let no one suppose that conversion is the beginning and end of the Christian life. There is a science of Christianity that must be mastered. There is to be growth in grace, that is constant progress and improvement. The mind is to be disciplined, trained, educated; for the child of God is to do service for God in ways that are not natural, or in harmony with inborn inclination.
- **Eight Essential Habits**
 - ✓ Daily personal prayer
 - ✓ Daily personal study of the Word of God
 - ✓ Daily morning and evening family worship
 - ✓ Weekly Sabbath school attendance
 - ✓ Weekly church attendance
 - ✓ Weekly prayer meeting / small group Bible study attendance
 - ✓ Regular personal witnessing
 - ✓ Regular involvement in local church ministries

The disciples of Jesus recognized a quality in His personal prayer life they lacked and greatly desired.

- **Luke 11:1** 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.”
- **Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 140** Christ’s disciples were much impressed by His prayers and by His habit of communion with God. One day after a short absence from their Lord, they found Him absorbed in supplication. Seeming unconscious of their presence, He continued praying aloud. The hearts of the disciples were deeply moved.

One issue facing the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the proclivity for a “Once learned, always learned” mentality. Many new members have heard as few as one sermon or Bible study on each point of Seventh-day Adventist faith. Reviewing and deepening our understanding of Bible truth is essential for Christian growth.

- **1 Peter 2:2** As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.
- **Our High Calling, p. 20** The food we eat at one meal does not satisfy us forever. We must daily partake of food. So we must daily eat the Word of God that the life of the soul may be renewed. In those who feed constantly upon the Word, Christ is formed, the hope of glory. A neglect to read and study the Bible brings spiritual starvation.
- **Our High Calling, p. 215** No renewed heart can be kept in a condition of sweetness without the daily application of the salt of the Word. Divine grace must be received daily, or no man will stay converted.

For a great many, Christian lifestyle practices--particularly those almost wholly unique to the Seventh-day Adventist Church--are one thing in theory and another in practice. In this area of the discipleship process, the careful instruction and consistent example of a mentor is invaluable. All too often, new believers slip back into old habits under the pretense of prioritizing things as “salvation issues” or not.

- **Sabbath Keeping**
 - How do I stay faithful when I’m not hired because of my Sabbath observance?
 - I know I’m not supposed to work or shop, but what do I *do* on Sabbath afternoon... nap?
 - How can I live in a house with a spouse who doesn’t keep the Sabbath?
- **Stewardship**
 - Do I tithe my gross or net income?
 - Where do the tithe dollars go?
 - Should I still return tithe if the pastor or conference leadership becomes unfaithful?
- **Health**
 - How do I cook without meat?
 - Is moderate and occasional alcohol use ok?
 - Must I give up caffeine?
- **Dress and Adornment**
 - What about family heirloom jewelry?
 - What about engagement and wedding rings?
 - What about makeup and nail polish?
- **Entertainment, Relationships, etc.**

One of the most vital ministries in any local church is attendance. There is a power in old fashioned showing up to stuff that is hardly estimable.

- **Leviticus 23:3** 'Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.
- **Pastoral Ministry, p. 183** A prayer meeting will always tell the true interest of the church members in spiritual and eternal things. The prayer meeting is as the pulse to the body; it denotes the true spiritual condition of the church. A lifeless, backslidden church has no relish for the prayer meetings.
- **Hebrews 10:23-25** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

In addition to active participation in their local church, new converts also need to be taught the prophetic significance of our denominational history.

- **1 Chronicles 16:12** Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth.
- **Last Day Events, p. 72** As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.

Denominational structure, both local and global, is a safeguard for new believers. Information breeds confidence and a thorough understanding of church order allows for healthy, thoughtful participation.

- **Acts of the Apostles, p. 185** As an important factor in the spiritual growth of the new converts the apostles were careful to surround them with the safeguards of gospel order. Churches were duly organized in all places... where there were believers. Officers were appointed in each church, and proper order and system were established for the conduct of all the affairs pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the believers.
- **Acts of the Apostles, p. 246** The council which decided this case was composed of apostles and teachers who had been prominent in raising up the Jewish and Gentile Christian churches, with chosen delegates from various places. Elders from Jerusalem and deputies from Antioch were present, and the most influential churches were represented... The entire body of Christians was not called to vote upon the question. The "apostles and elders," men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches. Not all, however, were pleased with the decision; there was a faction of ambitious and self-confident brethren who disagreed with it. These men assumed to engage in the work on their own responsibility. They indulged in much murmuring and faultfinding, proposing new plans and seeking to pull down the work of the men whom God had ordained to teach the gospel message. From the first the church has had such obstacles to meet and ever will have till the close of time.

At all levels, the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs informed, committed members to participate in church governance. From the local church board and business meeting all the way to the General Conference session, every church member should be familiar with the activities and initiatives of the local, conference, union, division, and world bodies.

A systematic discipleship program is necessary not merely to keep new members in the faith but develop them into active workers for the cause of Christ.

- **Christian Service, p. 58** It is evident that all the sermons that have been preached have not developed a large class of self-denying workers. This subject is to be considered as involving the most serious results... The churches are withering up because they have failed to use their talents in diffusing light. Careful instruction should be given which will be as lessons from the Master, that all may put their light to practical use.
- **Christian Service, p. 58** God expects His church to discipline and fit its members for the work of enlightening the world. An education should be given that would result in furnishing hundreds who would put out to the exchangers valuable talents.
- **Evangelism, p. 354** Personal responsibility, personal activity in seeking the salvation of others, must be the education given to all newly come to the faith.

Along with a review of the prophetic rise of the Seventh-day Adventist Movement, there must be clearly seen—not only a corporate but a *personal*—call to missionary service for God in these last days of Earth's history.

- **Revelation 10:11** And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”
- **Revelation 14:6, 7** Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”
- **Review and Herald, August 24, 1886** Wherever a church is raised up, the minister should not consider his duty done until it is thoroughly organized and placed in working order. Every member should become a missionary. All should be given something to do to help spread the light of truth; for this very activity will cause them to grow in spirituality... It is this kind of discipline that has been sadly neglected in many of our churches. The time and labor of our ministers have not been spent in the manner best calculated to keep the churches in a healthy, growing condition. If less time had been spent in sermonizing, and far more in educating the people to work intelligently, there would now be many more to enter the broad field as missionaries, and much more talent to be put to use in the various branches of the work.

Every church member, though active in the local church's cycle of evangelism, should also be continually working the field of influence the Lord has entrusted to them individually.

- ✓ **Soil preparation:** mingling with people and ministering to their needs
- ✓ **Seed sowing:** actively seeking to share Bible truth and ascertaining others' interest in spiritual things
- ✓ **Cultivation:** taking up the long but rewarding work of giving studying the Bible with seekers of truth
- ✓ **Harvest:** calling for decisions from those with whom Christ and His truth have been shared
- ✓ **Preservation:** mentoring new members to be genuine disciples of Jesus who seek others for Him